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To get to the heart of Brittany, join Paul Lamarra on a journey along the Nantes-Brest cycle route as he goes off the beaten track in this popular region, away from the summer crowds on the coast.

If you like to indulge an interest in history, then you will find Pierre de Villiers's touching story about tracing his Huguenot heritage in the port of La Rochelle really intriguing. I was amazed at how much he managed to track down, given that his family's story dates from the 17th century.

This issue we also have some very exciting interviews, including H  l  ne Darroze, who has been named the world's best female chef, and Vincent Lindon, who won the Best Actor award at the Cannes Film Festival this year.

Let us know what you're up to for your holidays,  
and wherever you're going, *bonnes vacances!*



Mark Sampson

Mark moved to south-west France with his family in 1995 and he now contributes to UK publications, including our sister titles *Living France* and *French Property News*. On page 82, he finds the best places to eat in the Dordogne Valley area of the Lot.



Freelance writer Eleanor is a former Editor of *FRANCE Magazine's* sister title *Living France* and still indulges her love of *l'Hexagone* by taking regular trips across the Channel. On page 72, she retraces the life of the architect Le Corbusier.



Richard is a journalist based in Edinburgh and is the director of the French Film Festival UK. He has also received the French cultural honour of *Officier dans l'ordre des arts et des lettres*. On page 90, he meets award-winning actor Vincent Lindon.





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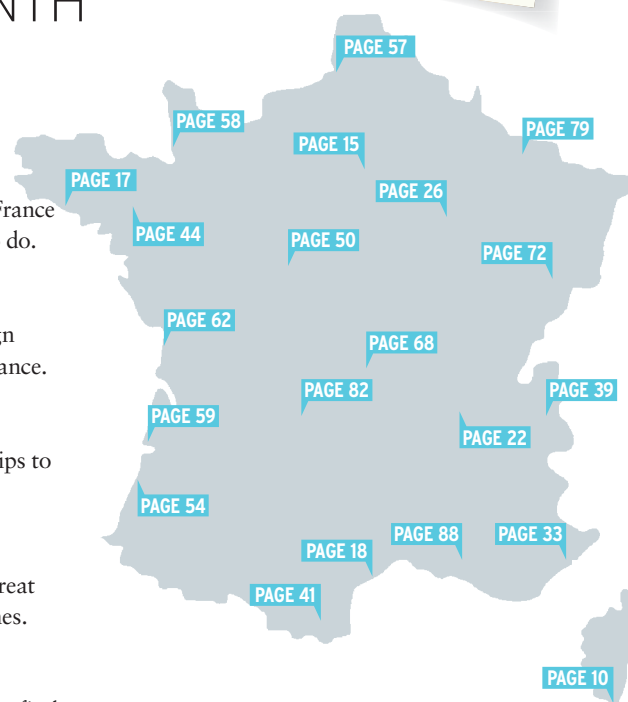
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● ON THE COVER



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COVER IMAGE: THE FISHING VILLAGE OF  
LE CANON ON THE BASSIN D'ARCACHON IN  
THE GIRONDE DÉPARTEMENT  
BY GÜNTHER GRÄFENHAIN/4CORNERS



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## ABOUT US

FRANCE Magazine is Britain and North America's best-selling magazine about France. Since 1990, it has enchanted readers with its stunning photography and excellent travel writing. Alongside its inspirational and informative travel articles, FRANCE Magazine offers features on food and wine, language and history, culture and current affairs; together, it gives readers the perfect taste of the very best of France. It truly is the next best thing to being there.

## QUI SOMMES-NOUS ?

FRANCE Magazine est une publication de première qualité, rédigée en anglais et consacrée exclusivement à la France. Depuis 1990, cette publication mensuelle à la réputation incontestée, domine le marché francophile en Grande-Bretagne et aux États-Unis. A travers des articles de voyage, des rubriques gastronomiques et linguistiques, FRANCE Magazine invite ses lecteurs à découvrir tous les meilleurs aspects de l'Hexagone et de ses produits.

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## OUR AWARDS

### 2014

■ Winner of Travel Article of the Year at the Abtof (Association of British Travel Organisers to France) Travel Article Awards **Ray Kershaw**  
■ Runner-up for Magazine Article of the Year at the Abtof Travel Article Awards **Judy Armstrong**  
■ Runner-up for Young Writer of the Year at the Aito (Association of Independent Travel Operators) Awards **Zoë McIntyre**

### 2013

■ Winner of Young Travel Writer of the Year at the British Travel Press Awards **Zoë McIntyre**  
■ Winner of Best Travel Article at the Outdoor Writers' & Photographers' Guild **Judy Armstrong**

■ Winner of Gastronomy Article of the Year at the Atout France French Tourist Board Travel Publication Awards **Eve Middleton**  
■ Winner of Travel Article of the Year at the Abtof Travel Article Awards **Judy Armstrong**  
■ Winner of Magazine Article of the Year at the Abtof Travel Article Awards **Judy Armstrong**  
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### 2012

■ Winner of Best European Destination Travel Feature at the British Guild of Travel Writers Awards **Judy Armstrong**  
■ Runner-up for Young Writer of the Year at the Aito Awards **Eve Middleton**

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# FRANCE *at a glance*

## PURPLE PATCH

Fields of cultivated lavender flank Banon, a village on the Vaucluse Plateau in Alpes-de-Haute-Provence that is also known for its AOC goat's cheese

PHOTOGRAPH: ANNA SERRANO/HEMIS.FR



# CORSICAN STRONGHOLD

The *haute ville* of Bonifacio, perched on the southern tip of Corsica, is dominated by the medieval citadel

PHOTOGRAPH: STÉPHANE LEMAIRE/HEMIS.FR







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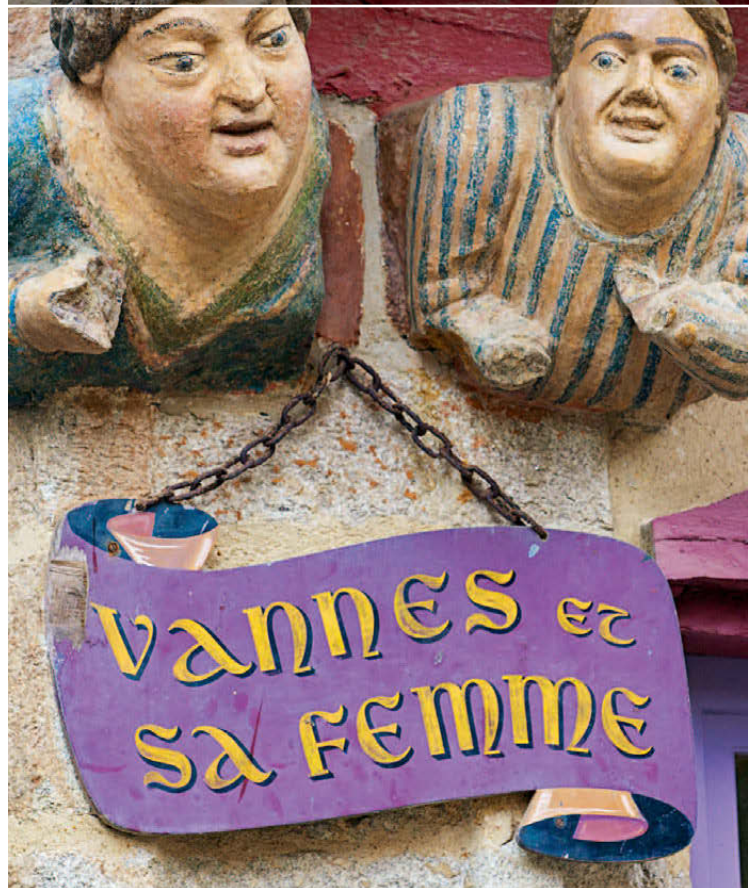
Organic fruit and vegetables make a colourful sight at a market stall on Place de l'Hôtel de Ville in Aix-en-Provence

PHOTOGRAPH: BERTRAND RIEGER/HEMIS.FR

## ETERNAL LOVE

A 16th-century granite sculpture, possibly of a trader and his wife, adorns a half-timbered building in the port of Vannes in Brittany

PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIPPE RENAULT/HEMIS.FR





## TREAT FOR THE SENSES

The Garden of Five Senses lies in front of the château in Yvoire, a *Plus Beau Village* on the shores of Lac Léman

PHOTOGRAPH: PIERRE JACQUES/HEMIS.FR



## STEP INTO THE WILDERNESS

Trekkers explore the rugged beauty of the Vanoise National Park near the Alpine resort of Méribel

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# How to be a Parisian

Paris-based **Stephen Clarke** gives his humorous take on life in the capital



**A**s a long-term resident of Paris, I know that all of us here are very romantic types. We spend a ridiculous amount of time gazing at sunsets, choosing bouquets and whispering sweet nothings. The city's candle-to-dinner-table ratio is the highest in the world.

I say this because our reputation took a hit in June this year, when the so-called 'love locks' were removed from the Pont des Arts, and the vows of thousands of couples were sent to the scrapyard. In all the social media, there were howls of disapproval about Parisians' sudden hard-heartedness. How could we, the Parisians, be so unfeeling?

It is true that I didn't hear a single Parisian complaining about the mass of padlocks being cut down from the railings on the bridge, where they had been steadily coagulating for several years.

The kindest thing I heard any Parisian say about the tourists and their padlocks was, "*C'est mignon*" ("It's cute"). It sounds very positive, but it is also the kind of thing you would say when a dog sits up on its hind legs and waves its front paws.

The most common reaction was, "*C'est moche*" ("It's ugly"). Which it was. Leaving aside the idea of symbolising eternal love by fixing a cheap padlock to a fence and then polluting the Seine with its key, the bridge itself was being transformed from Paris's lightest, airiest river crossing into a shapeless mass of metal.

This was a tall, slender, pedestrian-only bridge in the very centre of the capital, the ideal place to stroll and get a view of the Eiffel Tower to the south-west and Notre Dame cathedral to the east. It was also the perfect viewpoint down on to the Square Vert-Galant at the western point of the Île de la Cité.



Stephen Clarke's latest book is *How the French Won Waterloo, or Think They Did*, a light-hearted examination of France's enduring fascination with Napoléon.

This small garden is named after Henri IV, the 'green gallant' who was still chasing the ladies even at an advanced age – which is romantic in an old-fashioned, macho Parisian way.

Originally built in the 19th century and completely renovated in the 1980s, the Pont des Arts is a historic monument. As anyone who lives in an old Parisian building knows, the '*monument historique*' tag is both a blessing and a curse. If your building gets '*classé*', no one can erect a skyscraper next to it. On the other hand, if you so much as add a dot of colour to the black railings of your balcony, the city council will send out a Swat team to put things right. This protectionism is probably the same in every city. Imagine someone trying to insert a giant piercing into the Statue of Liberty's nose.

Yet the Pont des Arts was slowly being engulfed in 3D graffiti, its slim lines disfigured by a plague of metal *bubons*. And it was all in the name of an idea

of romanticism whereby you declare your *amour* with the kind of lock you would usually attach to a toolshed to stop intruders stealing your lawnmower. Is that really so romantic? Not in my book, and not in most Parisians' *livre*, either.

But if you come to Paris and are feeling romantic, don't worry. There are plenty of better ways to declare your affection.

Why not go to a café within sight of the Eiffel Tower, order a glass of your favourite tippie and then, exactly on the hour, at any time after dark, drink a toast as the tower bursts into five minutes of scintillating light and its whole frame quivers against the night sky as if someone had bathed it in fluorescent champagne?

It will be far more memorable and far tastier than simply clicking a padlock on the Pont des Arts. It also involves less risk of the bridge collapsing under the accrued weight of 45 tons of padlocks, and tipping you into a river that is usually not heated to a romantic temperature. [2](#)

● See our language section starting on page 94 for another view of the love locks controversy.

**{ Is it really so romantic to declare your *amour* with a lock that you'd normally attach to a toolshed? }**



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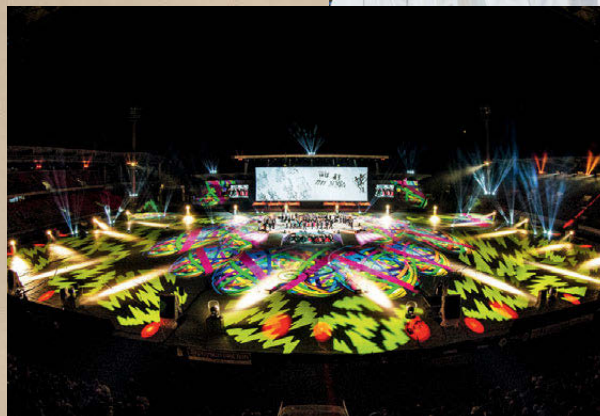
**T**he French love a festival at any time of year, but especially in the glorious days of summer. One of the most intriguing is the *Festival Interceltique*, a celebration of the Celtic cultures of France, the British Isles and Spain, held annually in the port of Lorient on the southern coast of Brittany. Thousands of participants gather in traditional attire, all eager to acknowledge the heritage that unites them.

The ten-day festival begins on Friday, 7 August, with a Breton seafood supper, or *kaoteriad*, in the Port de Pêche, which is accompanied by maritime music. The centrepiece comes two days later with the Grand Parade of the Celtic Nations, featuring 3,000 musicians, singers, pipe bands and dancers, who make a dazzling sight as they march through the Lorient streets in their national costumes.

Other events include a *bagadoù* (pipe band) championship, folk and rock concerts, dance displays, orchestral concerts and fireworks, completing a Celtic feast that transcends national borders.

Tel: (Fr) 2 97 84 78 00

[www.festival-interceltique.bzh](http://www.festival-interceltique.bzh) ➡➡



**ABOVE AND TOP:** The Grand Parade involves musicians and dancers from all the Celtic nations; **LEFT:** The festival features spectacular dance and light shows





# What to do in... August



## WORLD MUSIC

The town of Montoire in the Loir-et-Cher *département* has held a folkloric festival every year since 1973. The *Festival de Montoire* (pictured above), which runs from 11-16 August, aims to highlight the importance of world peace and interaction between cultures. Around 300 artists

from five continents perform traditional music and dances in a marquee and on street parades in front of nearly 20,000 visitors.

Tel: (Fr) 2 54 85 35 16  
[www.festival-montoire.com](http://www.festival-montoire.com)

## BRETON ROOTS

The fishing village of Concarneau on the southern coast of Brittany comes alive in August with music, dance and *gouren* – Breton folk wrestling. Dating back more than 100 years, the *Festival des Filets Bleus* (pictured below) is named after the traditional blue nets used by the village fisherman and will be held from 12-16 August. Tel: (Fr) 2 98 97 09 09  
[www.festivaldesfiletsbleus.fr](http://www.festivaldesfiletsbleus.fr)



## BEST OF BERLIOZ

The *commune* of La Côte-Saint-André in the Isère *département* is the birthplace of the Romantic composer Hector Berlioz and the setting for an annual festival in his honour, being held this year from 20-30 August. Concerts are staged in the courtyard of the Château Louis XI and will include a performance by the Orchestre de la Garde Républicaine of the vast *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale* for wind band. Smaller recitals are held in local halls and churches. Tel: (Fr) 4 74 20 20 79  
[www.festivalberlioz.com](http://www.festivalberlioz.com)

## SÈTE SPLASH

Water-jousting tournaments have been held in the port of Sète since the 17th century and the *Festival Saint-Louis* (pictured top) has become one of the biggest events on the French Mediterranean coast. From 21-25 August, thousands of onlookers will once again line the town's waterways to see joustiers in traditional blue and red costumes perch precariously on small boats and use their spears to try to knock their opponents into the water. Tel: (Fr) 4 99 04 71 71  
[www.tourisme-sete.com](http://www.tourisme-sete.com)

## BOOK NOW, GO LATER...



## FOODIE TRIP

If you enjoy the finest French cuisine but like to work up an appetite first, Cycling for Softies has come up with the perfect combination. It has launched three Michelin-starred itineraries in Alsace (pictured), Burgundy and Provence, where you explore these beautiful regions on two wheels by day and enjoy a gourmet dinner in the evening. The five and seven-night packages cost from £1,485pp based on two sharing and include accommodation in four-star hotels, at least four dinners in Michelin-starred restaurants, buffet breakfasts, fully serviced bike hire, luggage transfers and English-speaking assistants. Tel: 0161 248 8282  
[www.cycling-for-softies.co.uk](http://www.cycling-for-softies.co.uk)

## DRIVE IN STYLE

Ever wanted to drive an American classic car? Live the dream with self-drive rental company Cross Channel Sports Cars, which has added a 1965 Ford Mustang Cabriolet to its fleet. Tour the Tarn and Aveyron countryside of the Midi-Pyrénées and take the exciting 2.5-kilometre drive across the Viaduc de Millau, one of the world's tallest bridges. A package including three days' car hire, insurance and four nights in quality hotels starts from €1,875 for two people. Tel: (Fr) 5 63 94 58 31  
[www.ccsportscars.com](http://www.ccsportscars.com)

**20**  
minutes  
- the length of  
time Louis XIX  
ruled in 1830.



# Motoring ahead

Driving in France is one of life's great pleasures, but if you're taking your car across the Channel this month, be prepared with our tips for a successful trip

## Tolls

- When entering a motorway toll in France, simply take a ticket, and off you go. When leaving the motorway, have your cash or credit card ready. Be aware that not all cards are valid: Visa and Eurocard/MasterCard are accepted, but Maestro and Electro are not.
- Sign up for a Liber-t toll tag, which allows you to subscribe to the same system used by French drivers and pass through the lane marked with an orange 't'. In some cases you don't even need to drop below 30km/h to pass through. The toll charge (plus a small subscription) is taken by Direct Debit from your British bank account. Visit [www.saneftolling.co.uk](http://www.saneftolling.co.uk) for more information.
- Not all motorways in France demand a toll charge; examples include the A84 from Caen to Rennes, the A20 from Vierzon to Limoges, the N10 from Poitiers to Bordeaux, and many others. With the exception of the Viaduc de Millau (and who would mind paying the small charge for that?), the A75 from Clermont-Ferrand to Béziers is toll-free and also happens to be one of the most beautiful roads in France.

## Where to stop?

- The French have stop-offs down to a fine art, with so-called '*aires*' being placed, on average, every 20 kilometres along the motorways. Some offer just a picnic area and toilet block, while the '*aires de service*' provide something more akin to our British service stations.
- Also look out for the '*villages étapes*'. These villages or small towns set just next to the motorway have a double attraction: they give motorists the services they need, such as cafés, restaurants, toilets and overnight accommodation, as well as something of interest to explore. This can be a pretty town square, a park, garden or even a château. Visit [www.village-etape.fr](http://www.village-etape.fr) for more information.
- If you have to make an unscheduled stop on the motorway – in the case of a breakdown, for example – you must walk to the nearest emergency telephone, placed every two kilometres, and call for assistance. You will be towed to a designated area where those with European cover will be met by their breakdown provider. You cannot call for them to pick you up directly from the motorway.

## Make sure you pack...

- Reflective jackets (*gilets*) for everyone in the car. Be sure that they are within reach inside the car.
- A warning triangle, which – in the case of a breakdown – should be placed a safe distance behind the vehicle to warn other drivers of the obstruction ahead.
- Headlamp beam deflectors: British cars' headlights are designed for driving on the left, so when we switch to driving on the right, the beam can dazzle oncoming traffic. In order to correct this, you will need to buy special stickers to place on your lights. Alternatively, some cars allow you to adjust the beam manually.
- Breathalysers/alcohol kit: While the €11 fine for not carrying one has been postponed indefinitely, you are still required to have an NF-approved breathalyser in your car.
- The right documents: You need to carry the following – full, valid driving licence (international driving licences are recognised but not obligatory); proof of motoring insurance; proof of ID (passport); proof of ownership of the vehicle (V5C Certificate); travel insurance documents.

For our special subscription offer including some of these essential items, turn to page 67. ➡

**HIRING A CAR:** The UK photocard licence paper counterpart was abolished on 8 June, but the AA is recommending you retain it for driving and hiring a car abroad in case traffic police or hire companies are unaware of the change. Go to the DVLA website and print your own driving licence record and also get a code (valid for 72 hours) to allow a third party to access it ([www.theaa.com/motoring\\_advice](http://www.theaa.com/motoring_advice)).



# A Francophile's guide to... Manchester

Find a French connection on your doorstep

One of the UK's most popular destinations with foreign tourists, Manchester is renowned for its football rivalry and the long-running British soap opera *Coronation Street*, but in recent years the city has been developing a real French feel, too.

For anyone interested in improving their French language skills, a visit to the Alliance Française de Manchester in Portland Street (tel: 0161 236 7117, [www.afmanchester.org](http://www.afmanchester.org)) is a must.

The organisation runs a range of language courses, including taster sessions, and has a multimedia library. Pop back in the evening for a film or cultural talk, with topics ranging from the Battle of Waterloo to the life of actress Catherine Deneuve.

Have lunch at 63 Degrees (tel: 0161 832 5438, [www.63degrees.co.uk](http://www.63degrees.co.uk)) in the northern quarter. Run by the Moreau family from Paris, the restaurant brings modern French cuisine to the streets of Manchester with dishes including a millefeuille of salmon and red mullet with Provençal ratatouille (mains from £14.80, set lunch £18).

After lunch, head back towards the city centre and



ABOVE: Manchester Town Hall; RIGHT: A rack of lamb with aubergines at the 63 Degrees restaurant

visit the revamped Manchester Art Gallery in Mosley Street (tel: 0161 235 8888, [www.manchestergalleries.org](http://www.manchestergalleries.org)). Seek out the paintings by French Impressionist Pierre-Adolphe Valette, who taught in the city (L.S. Lowry was among his pupils), and a work by Paul Cézanne.

Follow your art-filled afternoon with an early dinner at swanky 47 King Street West (tel: 0161 839 1929, [www.47kingstreetwest.com](http://www.47kingstreetwest.com)). Head chef Rod Francis combines French and British flavours with a modern twist

in his dishes (mains from £14.95).

Round off your trip at Montpellier's (tel: 0161 832 3146, [www.montpelliers.co.uk](http://www.montpelliers.co.uk)), a French-themed café and bar in Back Turner Street. Pull up a chair and enjoy the live music while savouring a glass of your favourite French tippie.

**Peter Stewart**

For more on the city go to [www.visitmanchester.com](http://www.visitmanchester.com)



Read all about it...



Paris has so many experiences to enjoy that it's hard to know where to start, which is where *Make My Day: Paris* (Lonely Planet, (£5.99) can help. Divided into morning, afternoon and evening sections, the guide acts like a flipchart, letting you mix and match activities, restaurants and landmarks to create your perfect day.



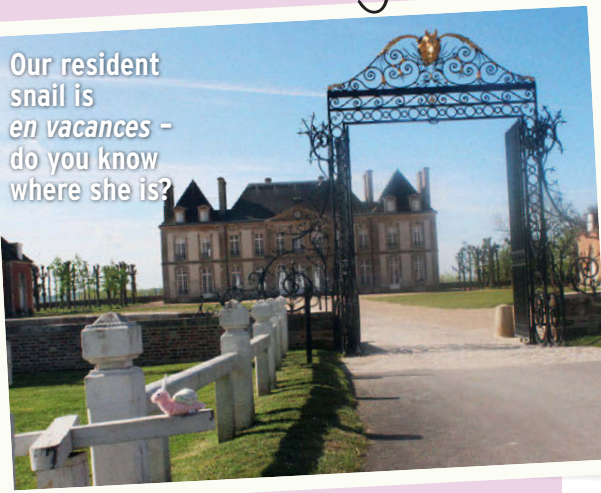
## Les aventures de Sergette

Sadly, our friend Serge l'Escargot has gone missing in action, so we have recruited his cousin, Sergette, to take his place. Her adventures this month take her to Normandy...

**WIN!** LUXURY HANDMADE CHOCOLATES



Our resident snail is *en vacances* - do you know where she is?



If you know the landmark - which plays an important national role - that Sergette is visiting, send the answer, plus your name and address, to [editorial@francemag.com](mailto:editorial@francemag.com) or write us a postcard (address on page 6) and you could win a 15-piece assortment of luxury handmade chocolates that come in an elegant mahogany box (worth a total of £87) courtesy of French chocolatier ZChocolat ([www.zchocolat.com](http://www.zchocolat.com)). Deadline for entries is 5 August, 2015.

The winner of the June competition is Mrs Nicky Thirlwall, from Reading in Berkshire, who correctly identified the megalithic site of Filitosa in Corsica.



# Save up to 30% on sailings



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# Quick guide to... Lyon



**Lyon is said to embody the French 'art of living': good food, wine, and culture. That's quite a reputation to live up to.**

Yes, but it does that easily. Lyon's heritage is as rich as the sauces in its 2,000 restaurants. Its historic landmarks make it a Unesco World Heritage site, but Lyon also has a passion for fine dining that locals are keen to share with visitors.

**Lyon seems to be an important stop on the foodie highway.**

It can lay claim to being the gastronomic capital of the world. To appreciate the care that goes into the cuisine, eat at a traditional *lyonnaise* restaurant, called a *bouchon*. One of the best is Le Bouchon des Filles in Rue Sergent Blandan (menus from €25, tel: (Fr) 4 78 30 40 44), where treats include black pudding in crispy filo pastry.

**I might need to walk off these meals!**

Fourvière Hill is the place to do that. Ignore

the funicular railway and walk to the top, where the views are spectacular. You can also explore the Basilique de Notre-Dame de Fourvière (pictured above), with its beautiful mosaics.

**Any sights that are more hidden away?**

Sure, head for the Renaissance district and lose yourself in the *traboules* – a maze of covered passageways and courtyards once frequented by silk weavers and merchants. The highlight is the criss-crossing staircase in Cour des Voraces.

**Isn't Lyon the birthplace of cinema?**

Indeed it is. The Lumière brothers grew up in the city and their 1894 film *La sortie de l'usine Lumière de Lyon* is considered the first motion picture. Learn more at the Institut Lumière (tel: (Fr) 4 78 78 18 95, [www.institut-lumiere.org](http://www.institut-lumiere.org)) and see the brothers alongside other famous *Lyonnais* in an amazing trompe l'oeil mural at 2 Rue de la Martinière.

**I hear that Lyon has a controversial new building.**

That will be the Musée des Confluences, which has been likened to a spaceship and a prone lizard. It is hoped that the striking structure, which houses more than two million items of natural history, will put Lyon on the architectural map. The €180 million cost has been difficult for many to swallow, though.

**Where should I stay?**

For something a bit different try Le Collège (tel: (Fr) 4 72 10 05 05, [www.college-hotel.com](http://www.college-hotel.com)) which is a fun, school-themed hotel in the old town with a refectory-style breakfast room complete with old books and blackboards. Doubles from €130.

**Get me there quick!**

Eurostar now runs a direct service from London to Lyon, with returns from £89.

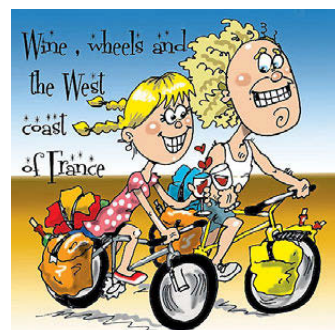
**Pierre de Villiers**

For more information visit [www.en-lyon-france.com](http://www.en-lyon-france.com)

## TRAVEL NEWS

### CHANNEL SHAKE-UP

The choice of ferry services between Dover and Calais has lessened with the closure of MyFerryLink at the start of July. Eurotunnel, which owned MyFerryLink, has leased its two ships, *Rodin* and *Berlioz*, to rival operator DFDS Seaways. Meanwhile, for reasons of ship rotation and maintenance, DFDS has cancelled its Sunday services leaving Calais at 9am and Dover at 10.15am until 20 December. Customers with bookings will be notified or they can telephone 0344 848 6090. [www.dfdsseaways.co.uk](http://www.dfdsseaways.co.uk)



### QUICK-DRAW ADVENTURE

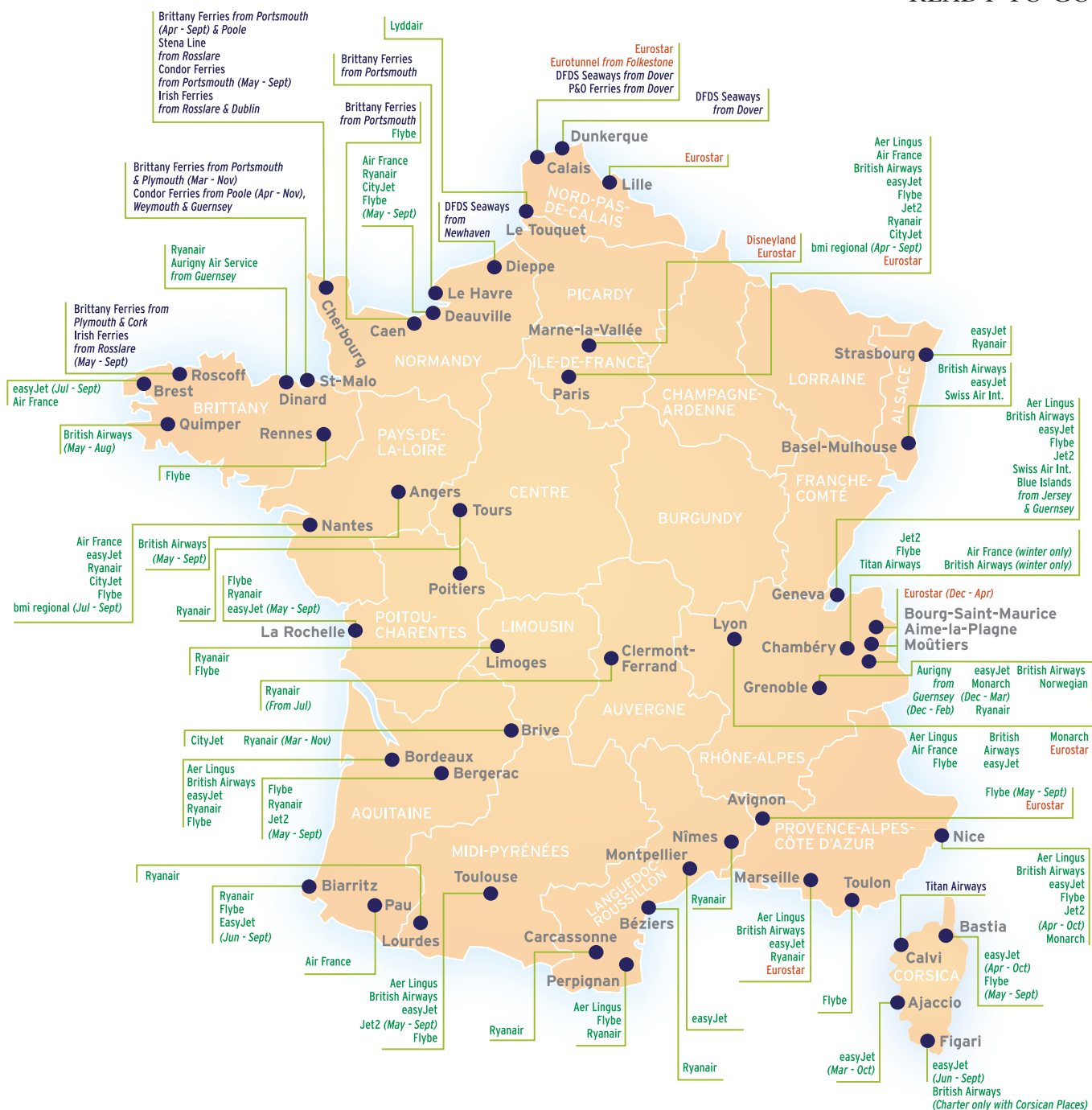
Caricaturists Sheba and Simon Cassini ([www.bitterandtwisted.org](http://www.bitterandtwisted.org)) are cycling the 1,200-kilometre coastal route from Brittany to the Spanish border on a cycling route known as *Vélodyssée* from 13 July to 11 August 2015. Each day (time and technology permitting!), they will be drawing aspects of what they see and *FRANCE Magazine* readers can follow their journey through their clever caricatures on our Facebook page. Log on to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search *FRANCE Magazine* from mid-July to see their drawings and guess where they are. [www.velodysssey.com](http://www.velodysssey.com)

### SATNAV UPDATE

Most satellite navigation manufacturers have now updated their software to comply with French law that bans speed camera detectors in cars. In order to conform to the regulations, drivers must download their satnav's latest map software for France before setting out. Devices in the point of interest section now alert motorists to 'danger zones', which may or may not contain speed cameras.







# ROUTE PLANNER

Plan your journey to France with our handy map and directory

## FERRIES

**Brittany Ferries**  
Tel: 0871 244 1400  
[www.brittanyferries.co.uk](http://www.brittanyferries.co.uk)

**Condor Ferries**  
Tel: 0845 609 1024  
[www.condorferries.co.uk](http://www.condorferries.co.uk)

**DFDS Seaways**  
Tel: 0871 574 7235  
[www.dfdsseaways.co.uk](http://www.dfdsseaways.co.uk)

**Irish Ferries**  
Tel: (ROI) 818 300 400  
[www.irishferries.com](http://www.irishferries.com)

P&O Ferries

Tel: 0871 664 2121  
www.poferries.com

**Stena Line**  
Tel: (ROI) 1 204 7777  
[www.stenaline.ie](http://www.stenaline.ie)

## RAII

**Eurostar**  
Tel: 0843 218 6186  
[www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)

**Eurotunnel**  
Tel: 0844 335 3535  
[www.eurotunnel.com](http://www.eurotunnel.com)

Voyages-sncf.com

Tel: 0844 848 5848  
www.voyages-sncf.com

## AIRLINES

**Aer Lingus**  
Tel: 0871 718 2020  
[www.aerlingus.com](http://www.aerlingus.com)

**Air France**  
Tel: 0871 663 3777  
[www.airfrance.co.uk](http://www.airfrance.co.uk)

**Aurigny Air Services**  
Tel: 01481 822 886  
[www.aurigny.com](http://www.aurigny.com)

## Blue Islands

Tel: 0845 620 2122  
www.blue  
islands.com

**bmi regional**  
Tel: 0330 333 7998  
[www.bmi-regional.com](http://www.bmi-regional.com)

**British Airways**  
Tel: 0844 493 0787  
[www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.com)

**CityJet**  
Tel: 0871 405 2020  
[www.cityjet.com](http://www.cityjet.com)

easyJet

Tel: 0330 365 5000  
www.easyjet.com

**Flybe**  
Tel: 0371 700 2000  
[www.flybe.com](http://www.flybe.com)

**Jet2**  
Tel: 0800 408 1350  
[www.jet2.com](http://www.jet2.com)

**Lyddair**  
Tel: 01797 322 207  
[www.lyddair.com](http://www.lyddair.com)

**Monarch**  
Tel: 0871 940 5040  
[www.monarch.co.uk](http://www.monarch.co.uk)

Norwegian

Tel: 0843 378 0888  
www.norwegian.com

**Ryanair**  
Tel: 0871 246 0000  
[www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)

**Swiss Int. Air**  
Tel: 0845 601 0956  
[www.swiss.com](http://www.swiss.com)

**Titan Airways**  
Tel: 01279 680 616  
[www.titan-airways.co.uk](http://www.titan-airways.co.uk)



This month we ask a reader, a family and a writer about their love of France

# Travellers' tales

1 What was your last travel experience in France?

2 On what would you spend your last €10?

3 Where would you like to visit next?

## A reader...



**Jane Shipman**  
Faversham, Kent



I went to Paris with my husband Richard to celebrate 45 years of marriage. The highlight was a tour of the Palais Garnier opera house with its sumptuous interior.

On a *ficelle picarde*, a pancake filled with mushrooms and ham, which is a speciality of the Somme area.



Having enjoyed all Kate Mosse's novels, I should like to visit Cathar country, particularly Carcassonne, and take a boat on the Canal du Midi.

## A family...



**The Harris family,**  
Inkberrow,  
Worcestershire

I spent a week last summer with my family in the Isère *département* in the Rhône-Alpes region. We did a lot of walking and loved the endless mountain views, stunning clear-blue lakes and wild flowers.



On a well-priced, full-bodied *vin rouge* with a soft, ripe Camembert.

I plan to go with my family to the Île de Ré, off La Rochelle. We want to hire bicycles and explore charming villages such as La Flotte, which is renowned for its food market and individual shops.

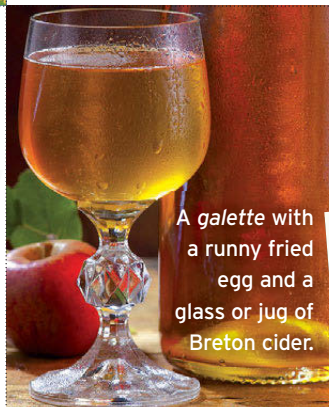
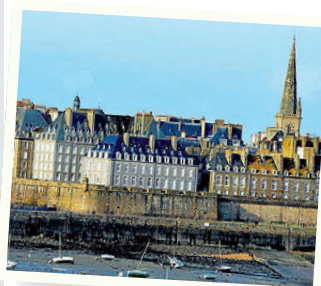


## A writer...



**Gabriella Bennett**  
The Times newspaper,  
Glasgow

A long weekend in Brittany, based in Saint-Malo, which revolved around eating and drinking.



A *galette* with a runny fried egg and a glass or jug of Breton cider.

The south of France is high on my list. The higgledy-piggledy houses [as in Collioure, pictured], the light and the laid-back lifestyle are calling.



**Are you going to France again soon? Tell us your plans at [editorial@francemag.com](mailto:editorial@francemag.com)**





# Summer holiday in... Cap Ferret

The Cap Ferret peninsula, west of Bordeaux, is one of France's best-kept secrets. With oyster farms, secluded beaches and cycle paths among the pine trees, *FRANCE Magazine* guides you to its highlights

**T**he best place to taste oysters is by the sea, and the catch doesn't come fresher than among the oyster-farmers' huts in the Cap Ferret peninsula in Aquitaine. As you sit outside one of the bistros that serves platters of iced oysters, sipping a glass of chilled white wine and looking out across the Bassin d'Arcachon, you'll soon realise why this is a destination so adored by the French.

With pine forests, cycling trails and beautiful sandy beaches, Cap Ferret is the perfect choice if you want to relax for a week or so. An ideal place to start a stay is with a visit to the lighthouse. This red and white beacon peeps out over the trees and provides a bird's-eye view of the peninsula and the triangular-shaped bay. Climb its 258 steps to the top and in one direction you get a fantastic view of the enormous Dune du Pyla – Europe's biggest sand dune – across the bay (*pictured above*) and, in the other, the Atlantic coast.

The lighthouse doubles as a museum, and interactive displays tell the story of the area and its oyster-fishing, explaining how boats navigate the complicated sandbanks in the bay. The lighthouse is in the village of Cap Ferret itself, the biggest community on the peninsula, where you'll find several oyster bars offering platters for lunch and dinner. The most famous haunt is Chez Hortense, a beachside restaurant that is something of an institution and proud of its history, which dates from the 1930s, when tourism slowly seeped into the area.

Thankfully, Cap Ferret has managed to resist the commercialism of modern tourism due to strict conservation rules that prevent development. Among the oyster-catchers' huts

of Cap Ferret and the other villages of L'Herbe, Le Canon and Pirailan, you will be glad of this unspoiled, rustic character. Packed tightly together, with nothing more than narrow gravel paths between them, these colourfully painted huts form a wonderful maze. Vibrant hollyhocks, gladioli and geraniums add to the idyll, while the piled-up crates and pallets are a reminder that these are working villages.

After pottering around the villages and lazing on the beach, you can see the area at a faster pace by whizzing through the trees, sand dunes and villages on a bike, or indeed a more modern two-wheeled transport, the electric Segway scooters (*gyropodes* in French).

You can venture out on to the water, too, with one of the many boat trips on the traditional pinewood *pinasses*. As well as exploring the oyster beds, boats can take you out to the Île aux Oiseaux, where two cabins stand on stilts when the tide is high, and perch on the sand when the tide is low. With so much to do, or indeed so little for those who simply want to relax, Cap Ferret makes the perfect escape.

For more information on where to stay and what to visit, see [www.lege-capferret.com](http://www.lege-capferret.com)

Eurotunnel Le Shuttle is the quickest way to the continent by car. Book early and get the best fares to explore Cap Ferret. Visit [www.eurotunnel.com](http://www.eurotunnel.com) or call 0870 850 8133 to book your crossing.







# Road TRIP

A journey through the Champagne region takes in a land-locked lighthouse, historic towns and, of course, a glass or two of bubbly

## DAY ONE

After dashing down the A26 *autoroute* from the ferry or tunnel at Calais, stop for the night in Reims at La Demeure des Sacres B&B (rooms from €145, tel: (Fr) 6 79 06 80 68, [www.sawdays.co.uk](http://www.sawdays.co.uk)). The mansion is just 150 metres from Notre-Dame cathedral and has luxurious, high-ceilinged rooms.

Head out for dinner at Anna S: La Table Amoureuse ❶ (6 Rue Gambetta, tel: (Fr) 3 26 89 12 12, [www.annas-latableamoureuse.com](http://www.annas-latableamoureuse.com)) with menus from €29. Walk off dinner by admiring the amazing 13th-century cathedral in all its illuminated glory, and the neighbouring Palais du Tau, a royal and episcopal

residence which, like the cathedral, is on the Unesco World Heritage list.

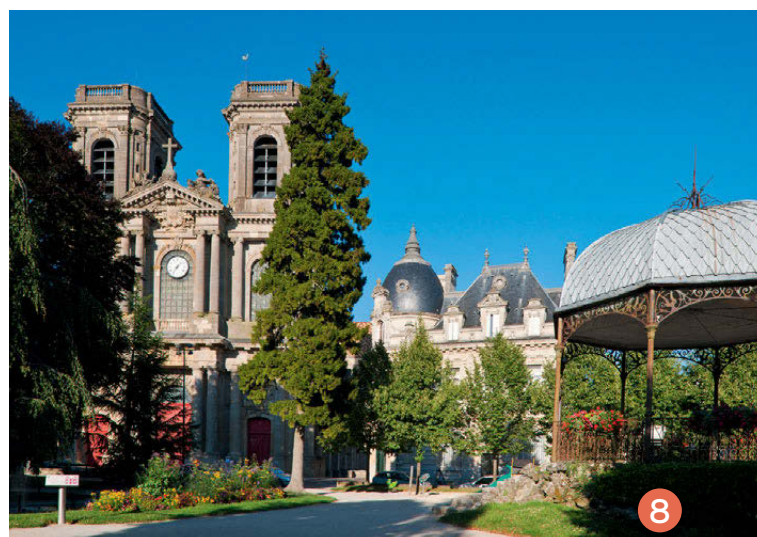
## DAY TWO

Next morning, after enjoying a buffet breakfast of home-made pancakes and jams at La Demeure des Sacres, leave Reims and head into the vineyards to the south. Join the Montagne de Reims Route du Champagne on the D7 and head toward Verzenay. En route, look out for the Moulin de Verzenay, now owned by the champagne house GH Mumm, which holds drinks receptions there. You can walk up to the windmill through the vineyards and the views from the hill are sensational.



PHOTOGRAPHS: SYLVAIN SONNET/HEMIS.FR; DREAMSTIME; CHÂTEAUX & HÔTELS COLLECTION; JEAN-PIERRE DEGAS/HEMIS.FR; FRANCK GUZIOU/HEMIS.FR





Your next stop is Le Phare de Verzenay ❷ (tel: (Fr) 3 26 07 87 87, [www.lepharedeverzenay.com](http://www.lepharedeverzenay.com)), a lighthouse built to offer amazing views over the 'sea' of vineyards, as its original owner – Joseph Goulet – intended. Here you can learn about the making of champagne, its traditions and legends, and enjoy a tasting. Continue south on the D26 through the vineyards to Ambonnay and have lunch at the Auberge Saint-Vincent (menus from €12.50, tel: (Fr) 3 26 57 01 98, [www.aubergesaintvincent.fr](http://www.aubergesaintvincent.fr)).

Afterwards, head south (D37, D3) to re-join the A26 near Chalons-en-Champagne and continue for an hour to Troyes ❸, where you spend your second night. Book into the five-star La Maison de Rhodes ❹ (rooms from €185, tel: (Fr) 3 25 43 11 11, [www.maisonde-rhodes.com](http://www.maisonde-rhodes.com)) for a real treat and dine at its gourmet restaurant (mains €34).

### DAY THREE

Spend the morning exploring Troyes, with its cobbled streets and half-timbered houses. The hotel is near the 13th-century cathedral, so start there and admire its

stunning stained-glass windows ❺ before seeing some of the city's other nine churches that boast beautiful stained glass. Pop in to see the 18th-century Apothecary of the Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte ❻, and admire the array of painted medicine chests, jars and pill boxes ([www.tourisme-troyes.com](http://www.tourisme-troyes.com)).

After lunch in the pretty courtyard of Le Valentino (menus from €28, tel: (Fr) 3 25 73 14 14, [www.levallentino.com](http://www.levallentino.com) – best to reserve in advance), it's time to continue south on the A5 for just over an hour to the walled town of Langres. Check into Le Belvédère des Remparts *chambre d'hôtes* for two nights (doubles from €90, tel: (Fr) 6 77 14 77 26, [www.lebelvederedesremparts.com](http://www.lebelvederedesremparts.com)) and venture out to stroll around the impressive ramparts, with their panoramic views of the Haute-Marne countryside before returning to the B&B for dinner (€18/€22).

### DAY FOUR

Limber up for a morning of exploration in the area around Langres on an electric bike ❷. Not much effort is required going uphill, with the battery there to

push you along. You can choose from various itineraries (tel: (Fr) 3 25 87 67 67, [www.tourisme-langres.com](http://www.tourisme-langres.com)) and it costs €15 for a half-day hire. If you take the route out around Lac de la Liez east of the town, reward your efforts with a meal at the Auberge des Voiliers (tel: (Fr) 3 25 87 05 74, [www.hotel-voiliers.com](http://www.hotel-voiliers.com)) while gazing out across the water from its lovely terrace.

Head back to Langres ❸ and spend the afternoon exploring its narrow streets and covered passageways with the help of an audio guide. Book a table for dinner at Le Cheval Blanc hotel-restaurant (menus from €36, tel: (Fr) 3 25 87 07 00, [www.hotel-langres.com](http://www.hotel-langres.com)).

### DAY FIVE

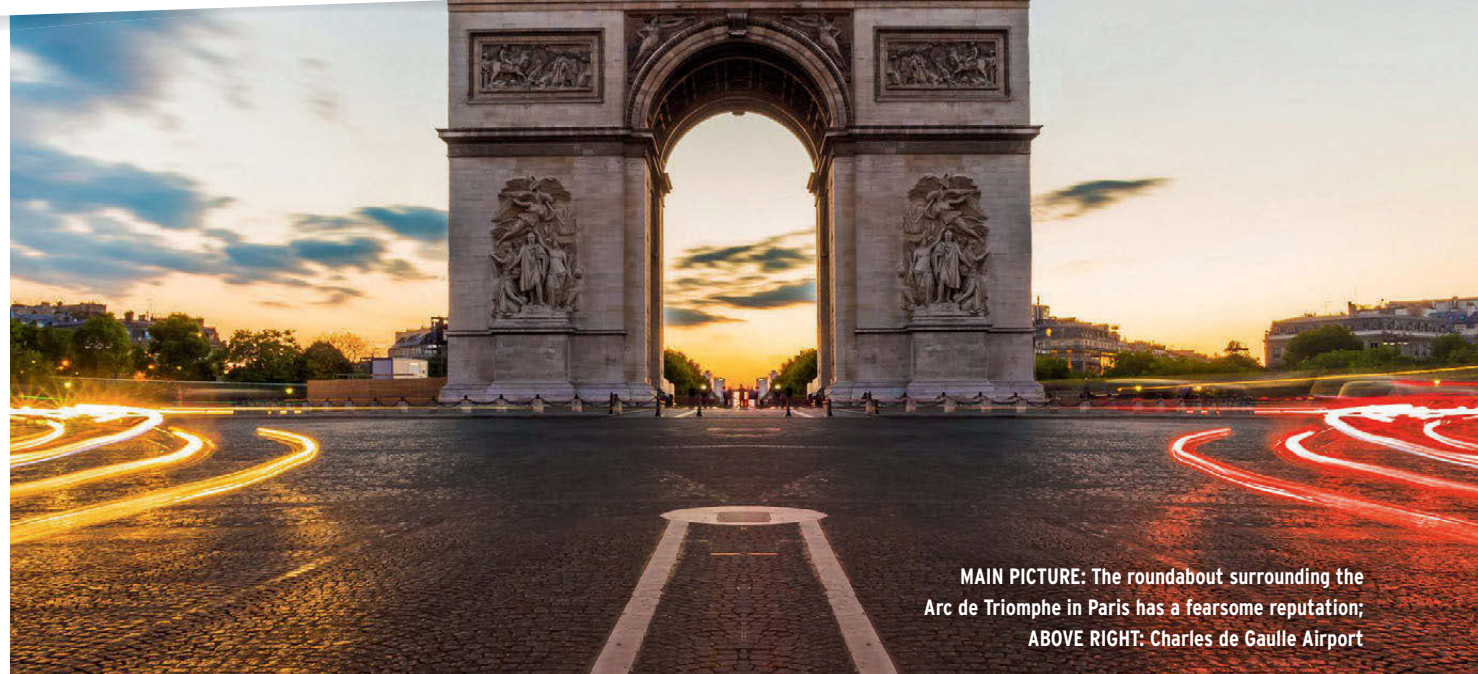
Rise early the next day and head homeward bound along the A5 and A26 on the 4hr 30min trip to Calais and the return Channel crossing. ➡

Carolyn Boyd

Enjoy this article? Tell us where you would like your road trip to be and we'll plan it out in a future edition. Email [editorial@francemag.com](mailto:editorial@francemag.com)



Keep up to date with  
all the latest news  
from France



MAIN PICTURE: The roundabout surrounding the Arc de Triomphe in Paris has a fearsome reputation;  
ABOVE RIGHT: Charles de Gaulle Airport

## Charm offensive

France has come up with a 20-point plan to make foreign tourists feel more welcome, as **Paul Lamarra** reports

Following a soul-searching exercise, French politicians and tourist industry leaders have come to a candid conclusion – on the pleased-to-see-you front, France could do better.

It is a surprising admission for the world's most visited country and one that has largely insisted on doing things its own way, despite the obvious confusion caused to foreigners.

The French government is worried that tourists are being put off by tales of snooty Parisian waiters, roundabouts that you have to drive around at least twice before knowing which direction to take and getting on the *métro* to Étoile Charles de Gaulle (Arc de Triomphe) expecting to find the airport.

Earlier this summer, Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius announced the findings

of six reports compiled by, among others, three-Michelin-star chef Joël Robuchon and Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo. Signalling a need to adopt the American 'Have a nice day' approach to hospitality, he highlighted 20 points that required urgent action if the French government were to achieve its stated aim of increasing visitor numbers from 84.7 million to 100 million by 2020.

Measures included signs in English at airports and railway stations, multi-lingual hotel staff, TGV train announcements in English, information kiosks and making it easier to get luggage on and off the *métro*.

"When we serve coffee or help someone to find their way, it's a service one renders to another, but also to France," Fabius told the foreign press. "In front of foreign tourists, we are all

ambassadors of France. If the visitor is satisfied with his stay, he in turn becomes an ambassador of our country."

The biggest tourist bugbear highlighted by the reports was the apparent difficulty in getting into the centre of Paris from Charles de Gaulle Airport, 30 kilometres to the north-east. New arrivals are apparently bamboozled by the signs, the difference between the *métro* and the high-speed transit RER network, and the ticket machines.

David Lebovitz, a Californian chef who has lived in Paris for 11 years and is the author of *My Paris Kitchen* and *The Sweet Life in Paris*, told *FRANCE Magazine* that the airport was definitely the top priority.

"It is the first and last impression that visitors have of Paris," he said. "There are no arrows to direct you to

PHOTOGRAPHS: DREAMTIME, SOLAL/SIPA/REX





## The biggest tourist bugbear was getting into the centre of Paris from the airport

the ticket counters and you have to go around and around until you find them on your own. Taxis from the airport should be required to accept credit cards and the RER could also become more welcoming.”

Aside from these practical changes, Lebovitz believes that the airport authorities should go further and offer visitors an introduction and a final reminder before departure of the nation's culinary delights.

“Many people come to Paris specifically to dine well and it's unfortunate that most of the dining options at the airports in Paris are fast-food chains. I would love to see local restaurants with younger chefs showcasing their food for travellers at the airport, perhaps coming up with ‘bento-style’ tasting boxes, with some great cheese and bread, wine and other French delicacies,” he enthused.

The English-speaking press, relishing a glimpse of apparent Gallic introspection, were quick to run headlines declaring that the government was asking its citizens to be less French. It is a point

that concerns many Francophiles, who fear that the pleasure and kudos of dealing with the French on their own terms will be diminished.

Stephen Clarke, *FRANCE Magazine* columnist and author of many books on the French and their foibles, said that although the government begged its citizens every summer to be friendly to tourists, the visitor who makes the effort to understand the locals will always have a better time.

“You still have to know the golden rules of dealing with the French,” Clarke explained. “Always be polite, always start a conversation with ‘*bonjour*’ and don't just launch into English and expect them to understand.”

And for vegetarians, a category of visitor that often puzzles French restaurants, he offered specific advice. “Don't say ‘*Je suis végétarien*’ unless you are in a trendy vegetarian restaurant.”

Clarke believes that despite the French government's admission and its recent intervention, tourists have been getting a better deal already. “It is all part of their ceaseless self-criticism – they love to complain about themselves,” he said. “In fact, service has been improving steadily for years and these days even taxi drivers are being helpful.”

## NEWS IN BRIEF

- The Petit Train Jaune, which runs 62 kilometres along narrow-gauge track from Villefranche-de-Conflent to Latour-de-Carol in the eastern Pyrénées, has been allocated €6 million from regional funds so its infrastructure and rolling stock can be

renovated. The section between Font-Romeu and Latour-de-Carol is under threat of closure.

- Bullfighting has been removed from France's list of intangible heritage icons, following an appeal court ruling. Animal rights groups, who brought the case, hailed the decision as an important step towards ending bullfighting in France,

where it remains legal in 11 *départements*.

- The newspaper *Le Figaro* has called for improvements in the quality of written French among schoolchildren. It claims that the amount of time spent studying the language has gone down over the past 50 years and is reflected in the fact that many pupils and teachers cannot spell.

## C'est qui?

Every month we cast a spotlight on a figure making headlines

**Name:** Michel Platini.

**Occupation:** President of Uefa (Union of European Football Associations).

**Tell me more:** Since Sepp Blatter resigned as president of FIFA – world football's governing body – amid accusations of fraud and bribery, Michel Platini has been the hot tip to succeed him when new elections are held later this year.

As president of Uefa, the 60-year-old Platini has been widely credited with bringing in reforms that have forced football clubs to live within their financial means and with giving a new impetus to the international Euro championships by proposing that the 2020 finals should be hosted in 13 countries.

For French sports fans, however, Platini will always be the prolific goalscorer who was a key part of a midfield foursome known as the *carré magique* (magic square) which almost took France to their first World Cup final in 1982. France lost in a semi-final penalty shoot-out to West Germany, but two years later Platini avenged the defeat when he captained France to the European championship title.

At club level he won every honour with Italian side Juventus and his graceful style of play earned him the Ballon d'Or (European player of the year) three times in a row (1983-85) – the only player to have achieved the feat.

On the field he was a magician and now, as France prepares to host the Uefa Euro 2016 finals, many hope he will once again work his magic and put Fifa back on track. ➡





# La grande question

Every month we explain the background to a top news story

## Is it time for French politicians to embrace austerity?

When Manuel Valls, the French Prime Minister, took a government jet to Berlin at a cost of €20,000 to the taxpayer to watch his home town team FC Barcelona (pictured below) win the Uefa Champions League final, it confirmed the widespread suspicion among the French that the newly adopted government austerity drive did not apply to the politicians advancing it.

Such was the outrage, the famously unapologetic Valls was forced to protest weakly that the trip was a necessary part of France's preparations to host the Uefa Euro 2016 football competition and to stump up €2,500 for his two sons who accompanied him on the trip.

For many political commentators it was an astonishing faux pas for a Socialist government struggling to persuade its citizens to accept unprecedented public spending cuts.

It is the kind of disregard for public sensitivity to profligacy and bling that François Hollande had hoped to end when he beat Nicolas Sarkozy to the presidency in 2012.

Yet despite a 30 per cent ministerial pay cut on taking office and refusing to take his annual holiday, Hollande has been dogged by a ministerial tax scandal, an affair with actress Julie Gayet and accusations from Valérie Trierweiler, his former partner, that he referred to the poor as 'toothless'.

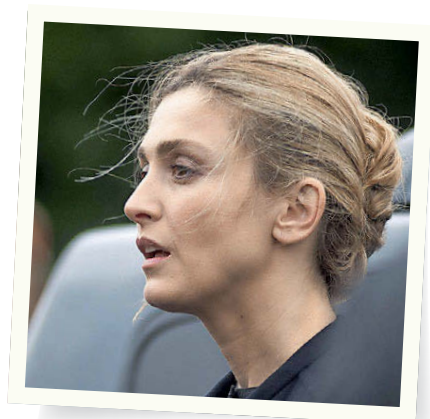


## 'First-lady' rumours fly as Gayet attends ceremony

French actress Julie Gayet, who was exposed by the paparazzi 18 months ago as President François Hollande's mistress, has made her first appearance at an official ceremony attended by the President, triggering speculation that she is about to take on the role of official first lady.

The ceremony, which marked the 75th anniversary of General de Gaulle's 18 June radio appeal from London for French people to join him in resisting the Nazis, took place at the Mont Valérien national resistance memorial. During the occupation, the Nazis executed more than 1,000 resistance fighters at the site on the outskirts of Paris.

The President's representatives were keen to point out that the actress's only role at the ceremony was to accompany her 92-year-old grandfather, Alain Gayet, a decorated resistance fighter.



## Minister's U-turn in Nutella storm

French Ecology Minister Ségolène Royal issued not one but "1,000 apologies" after withdrawing advice urging people not to eat Nutella. Royal claimed the chocolate hazelnut spread, which contains palm oil, was contributing to climate change because the increasing numbers of palm trees were threatening forests.

Nutella is a childhood breakfast staple in France, where more than 300,000 tons are eaten every year, making it the world's biggest market for the spread.

Ferrero, the Italian manufacturer, insisted that the palm oil, from Malaysia, was produced using sustainable methods. Italy's Environment Minister, Gian Luca Galletti (pictured with Royal before the controversy), told the minister to "leave Italian products alone".

Choosing to apologise via her official Twitter account, Royal wrote: "A thousand apologies for the row over Nutella."



## MPs vote to relax alcohol ad laws

French legislators have defied the government and voted to ease the strict laws controlling the advertising of alcohol. The amendment to the Evin law, passed in 1991 to control an alarming increase in binge drinking, draws a subtle distinction between information and advertising. Critics of the amendment argue that it opens the door to unlimited alcohol advertising.

Prior to the vote by MPs, the law prevented any advertising of drinks with more than 1.2 per cent alcohol and banned broadcasters of football games from showing alcoholic brand names on sponsored shirts or on hoardings around the pitch. Newspaper articles discussing wine could also fall foul of the law.

The change was proposed by Gerard César, a senator and former winemaker. "We are the only country in the world with such a ban," he claimed.



PHOTOGRAPHS: DREAMTIME; NICOLAS MESSIAS/SPA/REX; EPA EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY/ALAM; REPORTING: PAUL LAMARRA





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# Vignette M. Tea knows his wine

In her regular series, **Carol Drinkwater** shares a glass with a local *caviste*

Cannes might be the champagne-popping epicentre of the French Riviera, but set three kilometres inland is the elegant village of Le Cannet. It is where the actress Rita Hayworth took up residence, where the artist Pierre Bonnard settled and where a museum honouring his work has recently opened. It is now also home to a tiny establishment owned by a master of fine wines.

Le Cannet is a discreet hillside settlement with splendid art-nouveau villas and sweeping views to the Mediterranean. It lacks the ostentation of Cannes and its residents tend to keep a low profile. Its one drawback used to be that the only place to buy a decent bottle of wine was at the butcher's; that was until Monsieur 'Tea' arrived.

It was a Sunday morning when I first spotted the sign, directing me to 'fine wines'. I parked outside and went in. A youngish gentleman greeted me. He offered advice if I required it, but left me to browse the compact space, jam-packed with a glorious variety of wines ranging from *vin de table* at €5 to *Grands Crus* priced at several hundred.

'Welcome to the village,' I smiled. 'Are you new to the coast?' He shook his head. He had been the sommelier at the Majestic Hotel in Cannes. He wrapped up my chosen bottles of wine and wished me a *bon dimanche*. I, in return, wished him success.

Since then, I have become a regular customer. He never forgets my preferences and usually has a chilled Pouilly-Fuissé awaiting me on a Sunday morning after I have dropped my mother off at the church. I enjoy listening to stories of his wine-tasting visits to vineyards, his encounters at wine fairs, his tales of days and frequently long nights at the Majestic.

**{ Occasionally, wine producers drop by with a bottle or two buried in their jacket or bag**



Carol Drinkwater is the best-selling author of *The Olive Farm* series. Her latest works include the paperback *The Only Girl in the World*, set during World War I. Contact Carol at [www.caroldrinkwater.com](http://www.caroldrinkwater.com)

Sometimes another customer pops in and *Monsieur le caviste* offers them the same attention. Occasionally, wine producers drop by with a bottle or two buried within their jacket or in a bag.

"Ludovic, give me your opinion." I watch in fascination as the *caviste* uncorks the bottle, pours a drop into a glass and then swirls the liquid around in his mouth.

An opinion is then forthcoming. He is always honest but never unkind. "Light on the palate, not bad for a soirée with friends. Sell at €7."

"Is this a local wine?" I ask the customer. She shakes her head. "Where is it from?" I press.

The *caviste* smiles, knowingly. "It's a champagne, isn't it?" The young woman nods. "Very light, slightly fizzy. It requires more body in my opinion."

"Is that why you recommend a sale price of €7?" I want to know. I learn then that all wine houses have quotas. If they produce above the quota, it cannot be sold under their label. It must be sold as a *vin de table*, as an unnamed offering.

Usually, the wine producers are satisfied with his assessment. "It is a tricky business, Madame Drinkwater," the merchant confides when we are alone again.

I am taken aback that he knows my name. From credit card slips, I suppose.

"How could a wine merchant forget a regular customer called 'DrinkWater'?" he laughs.

He opens a bottle, pours us both a glass. "I like to make friends with my customers. Drink with them, share the delights of fine wine."

"Thank you," I smile. "And your name?" He proffers his card. Ludovic CHA, I read, and laugh out aloud.

Ludovic looks puzzled. CHA, I explain, comes from a five-thousand-year-old Chinese word – meaning tea. ☞





## READER PHOTO COMPETITION

The winner of this month's competition is Olivier Djiann, from Paris, with his image of Saint-Cirq-Lapopie, a *Plus Beau Village* in the Lot département.

Send us your holiday picture capturing the essence of France – either to our online reader gallery or by email – and we'll publish the best image in next month's *FRANCE Magazine*. The winner will receive two great prizes: a panoramic pod for taking 360° landscape shots on their smartphone (£15.99 from [www.iwantoneofthose.com](http://www.iwantoneofthose.com)) and a £50 voucher from photobook supplier Bob Books ([www.bobbooks.co.uk](http://www.bobbooks.co.uk)). To enter the September competition, send your high-resolution image to [editorial@francemag.com](mailto:editorial@francemag.com) or upload it to *FRANCE Magazine*'s Flickr page, [www.flickr.com/groups/france\\_magazine](http://www.flickr.com/groups/france_magazine) by 20 July. See the Flickr page for terms and conditions.



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## BOÎTE AUX LETTRES

STAR  
LETTER

**L** The feature on Rocamadour (*Take a Stroll*, July 2015, issue 202) brought back memories of our first visit to the village in 1964.

We spent a night there while returning from a holiday in Spain and were quite taken aback by the magnificence of the place. It was mid-June and the town was almost deserted – very few people were staying in the hotel.

That particular visit whetted our appetite and was the start of many holidays in France that we have enjoyed for the past 50 years with stays in hotels, self-catering accommodation and campsites. We even found some of our accommodation through advertisements in *FRANCE Magazine*, all of which turned out to be very good!

We have visited Rocamadour several times since 1964 but have not found it deserted – in fact it's always been quite the opposite. Unfortunately, my husband's condition means that we are no longer able to visit, but we can relive many of our holidays through your excellent magazine filled with interesting articles and beautiful photography.

**p**



It is always a pleasure to see it arrive on our doormat.

**Eileen Wilson  
Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire**

### *Vichy's legacy*

Paul Lamarra is perfectly justified in drawing attention to the continuing legacy of Vichy's wartime Pétain regime (*FRANCE Magazine*, July 2015, issue 202), but the town's embarrassment with its past is actually fading fast.



**@RamblingEpicure**

**I always have to visit  
Chartres when in France.**

PHOTOGRAPHS: FOTOLIA



**f Janice Mendoza**  
**I've just got back from Nice...  
 it's such an amazing place.**

Steps are well under way to establish a museum of Vichy regime memorabilia, and the town's Left Radical MP, Gérard Charasse, is convinced that it is time to mark its past without celebrating it, not least in order to warn younger generations of what can happen without due vigilance.

It has been significant that I have been able to find items here in Britain for this museum that have not survived in Vichy itself.

**Michael Meadowcroft**  
 Leeds, West Yorkshire

### *Divisive figure*

Thank you for the illuminating and detailed feature on the Battle of Waterloo (*FRANCE Magazine*, June 2015, issue 201). Considering that Napoléon Bonaparte posed such a threat to Europe and that history has marked him down as one of the worst tyrants that ever lived, it has never ceased to amaze me how he continues to be so revered. He is almost canonised on Corsica – his birthplace – and certainly the grandeur of Les Invalides in Paris, where his tomb resides, is more worthy of a hero than a villain.

Perhaps the paradox could be explained by a remark I remember from my days at the Secretarial College of the Lycée Français de Londres. During one French geography lesson, the indomitable lady who taught us commented: "In Paris we have many places which celebrate

*Say bonjour to...*

### **Horsham French Club**

Horsham French Club has been sharing its love of all things French with the residents of the West Sussex town for 27 years. The group was founded by French teacher Elyane Dale and now has 70 members, who are a mixture of British Francophiles and French expatriates wanting to share and discuss their love of France.

The group meets in the Roffey Millennium Hall at 8pm on the second Friday of each month from September to June. Meetings take the form of a presentation in French on topics ranging from French painters to *franglais*, and are often given by visiting speakers. Games, quizzes and conversation follow the presentations, with French being spoken as much as possible to ensure that everyone, whatever their level, has the chance to practise.

Highlights include a Bastille Day dinner and a *soirée de Noël* with games and a feast. Annual membership costs from £25 and visitors can come to individual meetings from £4. The group plans to increase the number of events in the 2015-2016 season to attract even more members. [www.horshamfrenchclub.org.uk](http://www.horshamfrenchclub.org.uk)  
 Do you belong to a group with French connections? Tell us about it by emailing [editorial@francemag.com](mailto:editorial@francemag.com) or write to the address on the facing page.



the victories of Napoléon – in London you remember only his defeats."

**Mickie Wynne-Davies**  
 Le Lavandou, Var, France

### *Best of Brittany*

I loved reading your feature on Brittany's hidden beaches (*FRANCE Magazine*, July 2015, issue 202) because it brought back lovely memories of our first family holiday in France. Ten years on and we are always visiting France; in fact, we have become hooked and won't go anywhere else!

**Leigh Richards**  
 Halesworth, Suffolk



Plage du Lourtauais, Erquy,  
 in northern Brittany

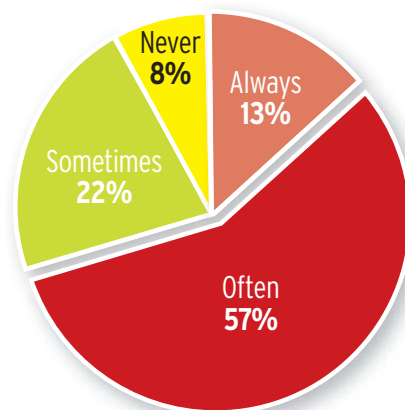
### READER POLL

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LAST MONTH WE ASKED:  
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[www.completefrance.com/FMIndex](http://www.completefrance.com/FMIndex)





# Where to stay... for an active holiday

Make the most of France's great outdoors with our guide to accommodation offering exciting adventures on the doorstep

## ▲► CANOEING Hôtel Le Belvédère, Ardèche

Local specialist instructors will guide you in canoeing techniques along the Gorges de l'Ardèche if you opt for the activity during a stay at this luxury hotel. You don't have to be an experienced canoeist to enjoy a day paddling through the spectacular scenery, stopping for a swim and a picnic. The Belvédère has 27 large and well-appointed bedrooms with views of the gorges and their steep-sided rock

formations. You can also go rock climbing, explore the local cave system and visit the newly opened Caverne du Pont-d'Arc to see a replica of 36,000-year-old paintings discovered in the nearby Grotte Chauvet.

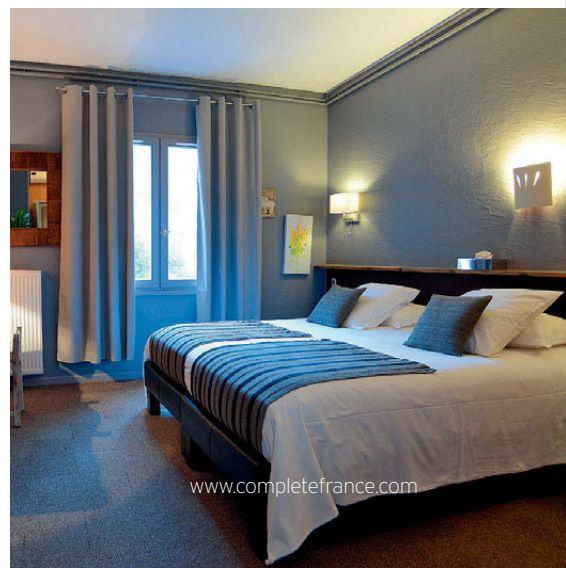
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**Doubles from €60; sample canoeing price €16 for 8km trip; cave visit around €13.**







## WHERE TO STAY

### ▼► CYCLING L'Autre Vie, Gironde

The vineyard routes of Entre-Deux-Mers may not be as famous as their northern cousins in Saint-Émilion or those to the west in the more prestigious estates of Bordeaux, but for cyclists looking for gentle rides through the vineyards, the quieter roads around the village of Camiran make an excellent destination for leisure cycling.

Here, the boutique-style B&B L'Autre Vie is perfectly placed both as a stopover for anyone cycling the *Canal des Deux Mers à Velo* trail from the Atlantic coast to the Mediterranean, and those making daily trips from a fixed base.

If you're not arriving with your own wheels, the Australian owners Vanessa and Justin Parr can help to arrange bike hire in nearby Sauveterre-de-Guyenne, before sending you off with a picnic in your basket or panniers. They'll welcome you back with a glass of wine – and there may just be a feast ready on the barbecue after you have cooled off in the pool.

Indeed, L'Autre Vie is a wonderful place to wind down after an active day. The B&B has four rooms: New York, Sydney, London and Bordeaux, each styled on a place that the couple have called home. New York is the showpiece, with windows that run the full length of the room, making it possible to lie on the bed and gaze over the vines and the valley beyond.

In the grounds, the private pool and expansive decking area have a secluded feel as there are no neighbours within sight. On any



days off from cycling, horse riding and canoeing are available nearby as, of course, is that other important local activity, wine-tasting.

The property is very accessible, being just off the D670 linking La Réole to Sauveterre, and is a convenient base for exploring the Bordeaux region's less well-known wine *appellations*. And there are few better ways to potter along vineyard routes than on a bike.

**Lynette Eyb**

**Champ de la Grave**  
33190 Camiran  
Tel: (Fr) 6 46 44 79 41  
[www.autre-vie.com](http://www.autre-vie.com)  
Doubles from €100. ➡➡



PHOTOGRAPHS: FOTOLIA; ADDITIONAL REPORTING: SHEENA HARVEY





## ▲▼ GOLF Hostellerie de Levernois, Côte-d'Or

This elegant 18th-century country house hotel lies beside the River Bouzaize in a five-hectare park among the Côte de Beaune vineyards of Burgundy. It is part of the Relais & Châteaux hotels collection, which gives the benefit of golf-inclusive special rates. The golf club in Levernois has an 18-hole course with nine lakes and white-sand bunkers, and also offers lessons, club and buggy rental, and a driving range. Three more courses are within 60 kilometres. From the hotel you can also go ballooning, microlight flying, horse riding and cycling.

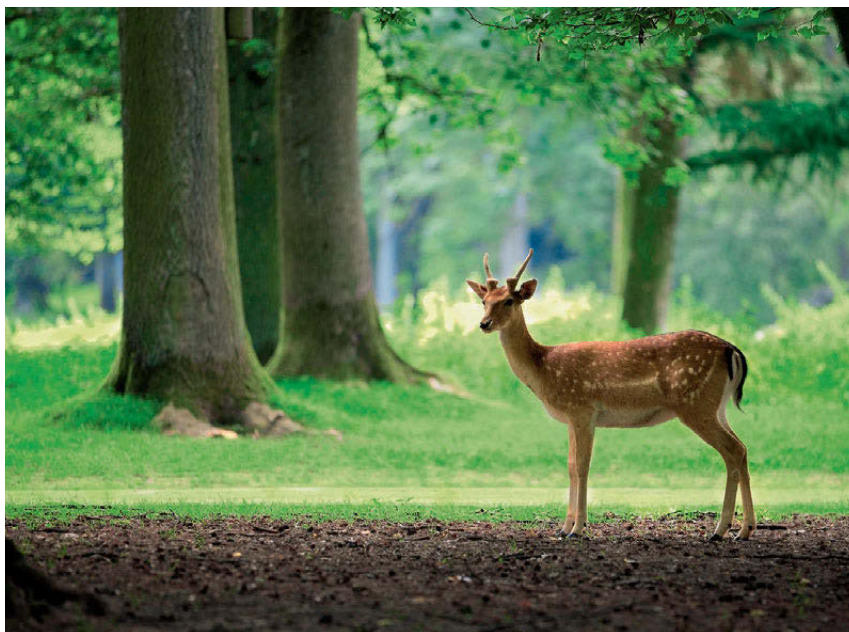
Rue du Golf

21200 Levernois/Beaune

Tel: (UK) 00 800 0825 1020

[www.relaischateaux.com](http://www.relaischateaux.com)

Doubles from €280pp, including half-board and golf green fees.



## ▲ NATURE Center Parcs, Poitou-Charentes

Just as in the UK, the Dutch-owned parks in France offer comfortable accommodation and a range of indoor and outdoor activities for all ages. The fifth Center in the country opened at the end of June at the Domaine du Bois aux Daims, half an hour south of Saumur. It takes up 260 hectares of a medieval hunting area and has been designed to safeguard the area's eco-diversity, allowing visitors to experience nature

at first hand. The cottages blend wood and stone to create a country house atmosphere, and the wildlife encounters include cycling in the forest and canoeing on the lake to look for deer and racoons, as well as snorkelling in the Cenote Pool, with its tropical fish.

Route des Trois Moutiers

86120 Morton

Tel: (Fr) 8 91 70 16 00

[www.centerparcs.com](http://www.centerparcs.com)

Cottage for four people from €579 for a week.







### ▼ HIKING Camping Val d'Ambin, Savoie

The Haute Maurienne valley, on the edge of the Vanoise National Park and spliced by the River Arc, is an active person's paradise. Surrounded by mountains, glaciated peaks and rich forest, it is the perfect platform for outdoor fun. Part of its appeal is the low-key tourism: there are some excellent restaurants and plenty of places to explore and enjoy, but no pretension, crowds or inflated prices.

Small towns and villages are scattered along the valley, which rises in three steps from Modane to Bonneval-sur-Arc. One of these is Bramans, a peaceful Alpine village with views into the Vanoise.

A short hop from Modane, Bramans is home to one of Savoie's best campsites. But Camping Val d'Ambin offers more than a space to pitch a tent. Besides facilities for motorhomes, tents and caravans, it has five large Hannibal tents (half-canvas, half-wood), a handmade, wooden Rousseau caravan and a clutch of beautiful wooden chalets.

The chalets are light and spacious. Sleeping four in comfort in two bedrooms, they can take six at a squeeze, using a pull-out sofa in the small living area. For self-catering,

the kitchen is better equipped than most houses, and the owners leave lots of random extras – a tin of soup, chocolates, crisps, soap.

Each chalet has a veranda with outdoor furniture, overlooking meadows, mountains and forest. It's just the spot for breakfast, or an aperitif as the sun sets.

While the accommodation is delightfully different, the location is the reason to be here. Summer pleasures include hiking, mountain biking, no-kill fishing, climbing the *via ferrata* climbing routes, and following the trail of Hannibal; there is also a themed walking trail from the campsite to Bramans and Le Verney.

In winter, the chalets offer immediate access to cross-country skiing and snowshoeing on trails, plus toboggan runs. Free shuttle buses run to more cross-country ski trails and the ski resorts of Val Cenis, Termignon, Aussois and Bonneval.

**Judy Armstrong**

**602 Route de l'Église  
73500 Bramans  
Tel (Fr) 4 79 05 03 05  
[www.camping-bramansvanoise.com](http://www.camping-bramansvanoise.com)  
Chalets from €230 a week, from  
€60 a night.**



### ▲ HIKING AND PAINTING La Chandoline, Jura

A leisurely week's summer hiking in the Haut-Jura natural park can be combined with art lessons on this holiday. Small groups, led by a mountain guide and a watercolour teacher, sketch some of the amazing scenery on a half-day snowshoe walk and transfer it to canvas after returning to the cosy La Chandoline inn. It's a heady mix of fresh air, exercise and good food, with the bonus of having your drawings expertly assessed and improved.

The inn is built from natural materials to minimise energy consumption and has 11 private and six shared rooms, as well as two self-catering cottages to rent. In the shared rooms you have to supply your own sheets and the washing facilities are communal. The inn also organises mountain biking and, in winter, cross-country skiing, and you can have a sauna and massage too.

**Le Manon  
39310 Lajoux  
Tel: (Fr) 3 84 41 26 93  
[www.lachandoline.com](http://www.lachandoline.com)**

**A week's full board in a double room with private bathroom, including watercolour tuition (but not materials), €670pp. ➡**





## ▲ WALKING

### La Joie de Vivre, Hautes-Alpes

This unforgettable trekking experience starts from the Joie de Vivre mountain auberge and takes you through Alpine valleys in the company of specialist guides and llamas carrying your belongings. Hikes last from two to five days and include gourmet picnics and overnight stays in mountain huts.

Accommodation at the auberge is in spacious, wood-clad rooms, using eco-friendly products. The auberge also holds a discovery day with the llamas, where you learn about the animals and how their wool is spun, and experience the history and natural beauty of the valley, with a barbecue to round everything off. Winter activities include mountaineering, a ski school and snowshoe tours.

**Hamlet Salé**

05100 Névache

Tel: (Fr) 4 92 21 30 96

[www.la-joie-de-vivre.fr](http://www.la-joie-de-vivre.fr)

Hiking with llamas from €186pp (two days/one night). Half-board at the auberge €94pp per night (two people).



## ▲► SKIING

### L'Ancienne Poste, Hautes-Pyrénées

This beautifully restored village postal lodge is a short drive from four ski resorts. Private lessons are available and you can arrange ski tours and spend a night in a mountain refuge. The hotel has six modern bedrooms, and a large lounge and dining area with beams and wood-burning stove, bar and home cinema. Aside from the skiing you can try ice climbing, snow-shoe trekking, ice skating or racing with a dog-sled team.

65240 Avajan

Tel: (Fr) 6 09 49 73 80

[www.ancienneposteavajan.com](http://www.ancienneposteavajan.com)

Seven nights' half-board, including two days' guided ski tour, €899pp.







## ▲ FISHING Le Chambard, Haut-Rhin

The crystal-clear rivers and lakes of the Vosges mountains in Alsace are popular with anglers, and Le Chambard, in the picturesque village of Kaysersberg, makes an ideal base. You don't have to go it alone, because catch-and-release fly fishing can be arranged at reception with local guide Eddy Zohner. Back on dry land, the Sentier Pieds Nus provides an unusual walking experience as you stroll barefoot through the forest on a specially made path. The hotel has 32 contemporary-styled rooms and suites, and a two-Michelin-star restaurant. For a further a gourmet treat, hire a bike and explore the vineyards on the Alsace Wine Route, which runs through the village.

9-13 Rue du Général de Gaulle  
68240 Kaysersberg  
Tel: (Fr) 3 89 47 10 17  
[www.lechambard.fr](http://www.lechambard.fr)  
Doubles from €174.

PHOTOGRAPHS: FOTOLIA



## ▲► CYCLING Aux Quatre Saisons, Aude

When the Tour de France isn't passing the front door of the Aux Quatre Saisons B&B, this corner of the Aude *département* in the foothills of the Pyrénées is a peaceful place, with gentle hills and quiet roads. There is plenty to keep experienced cyclists happy, while still providing the solitude that is seldom found in the more famous cycling hotspots further south and west.

Finding a destination with challenging routes for experienced riders while also keeping non-cyclists and children in the group happy can sometimes be hard, which is why this area is ideal. There are lovely walks through the spectacular Gorges de Saint Georges, plus canoeing and kayaking on the River Aude, which runs through Axat, where the B&B is based. The village also has a large, open-air heated swimming pool, complete with waterslide and mountain views.

When Paul and Val Bridgestock bought Aux Quatre Saisons 14 years ago, it was an abandoned wreck. It was quite by accident that they turned their French renovation project into a B&B after a friend suggested that the layout might work as a *chambre d'hôtes*. It proved prophetic, with the B&B winning accolades in the French *Petit Futé* travel guide for three successive years and being praised by cycling



magazines, which recognised early on that it was an ideal biking base.

The couple have extended the property so it now has three standard double rooms with garden or mountain views, and a garden room with French doors that open on to a private terrace (with sun lounger). An upstairs apartment caters for families or couples wanting a little extra privacy.

Rooms are tastefully decorated (Paul worked for an interior design company before moving to France), with classic colour schemes and quality workmanship combining to ensure the building has kept all its original charm.

LE

101 Route de Font Romeu  
11140 Axat  
Tel: (Fr) 4 68 20 14 67  
[www.sudfrancechambresdhotels.com](http://www.sudfrancechambresdhotels.com)  
Doubles from €50, apartment from €60, including breakfast; under-tens free. Home-cooked dinners available on request. ➡➡





### ▲ RIDING

#### Les Arnelles, Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer

Be at one with nature and the famous white horses on a horse riding holiday in the Camargue Nature Reserve. The hotel has stables on the premises and qualified instructors to give lessons and courses to improve skills to riders of any level.

You'll wake to the sound of birdsong in one of the 15 double rooms and suites connected to the main, ranch-style building by wooden boardwalks over the wetlands. The rooms are decorated in natural shades of creams and browns, and have rustic furnishings and exposed beams. They all have terraces bounded by woven grass fencing looking out over the reserve, and there is a swimming pool that blends into its reedbed backdrop. The dining room, which also provides superb views over the Camargue marshes, serves food with a Mediterranean influence.

**Route d'Arles**

13460 Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer

Tel: (Fr) 4 90 97 61 59

[www.lesarnelles.com](http://www.lesarnelles.com)

[www.arnellescamargue.com](http://www.arnellescamargue.com) (riding and stables)

Doubles from €14, riding from €20pp.

### ▼ SAILING

#### Welcome Hôtel, Côte d'Azur

Right next to the sea in the old port area of Villefranche-sur-Mer, the Welcome Hôtel has 32 rooms decorated in restful colours, all with balconies and views of the marina, the beach and Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat. The Welcome also has its own sailing boat with a skipper, which can take up to eight guests on either a half- or full-day excursion on the Mediterranean. The boat is named *Orphée* in honour of the writer and artist Jean Cocteau, a frequent guest, who wrote part of his 1960 film *Le Testament d'Orphée* at the hotel. He often mentioned the hotel in his books and one of his drawings is reproduced in a mosaic at the entrance.

**3 Quai de l'Amiral Courbet**

06230 Villefranche-sur-Mer

Tel: (Fr) 4 93 76 27 62

[www.welcomhotel.com](http://www.welcomhotel.com)

Doubles from €149, boat rental €1,150 full day, €770 half-day.



### ► BIRDWATCHING

#### Châteaux dans les Arbres, near Bergerac

The limestone landscape and mixed forest and farmland dotted with small lakes make this part of the Dordogne a fascinating area for spotting a variety of birds, particularly in the autumn migration season. Staying in the grounds of the Domaine Puybétou is special because you stay in treehouses, built to resemble miniature wooden castles and straddling the remains of a castle moat.

Each is fitted with rustic wooden furniture, and natural stone and slate, but with all the modern conveniences for a pleasant stay. Being that high up puts you in the midst of nature. You can sit on the extensive balconies with your binoculars and watch the tree canopy, or relax in a hot tub. There are bicycles to borrow for exploring the area.

**Domaine de Puybétou**

24440 Nojals-et-Clotte

Tel: (Fr) 6 30 64 26 00

[www.chateauxdanslesarbres.fr](http://www.chateauxdanslesarbres.fr)

Treehouse for two from €200 per night. 



PHOTOGRAPHS: FOTOLIA

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# Into the heart of Brittany

On a tranquil cycling trip, **Paul Lamarra** uses the waterways as his guide to discover a different side to this dramatic region

**W**hen I pulled over for lunch at the Île aux Pies on the Nantes-Brest canal it had been a day and a night since my departure from Nantes. I was cycling westwards through the centre of Brittany on the canal's towpath and, unlike much of my journey so far, it was a busy spot.

There was a scramble for tables at the Marins d'Eau d'Oust restaurant as a group of horse riders dismounted and an even larger contingent of cyclists removed their helmets and leaned their bicycles against the chestnut tree. Down on the jetty canoeists, just as eager to bag their place, lifted themselves gingerly on to dry land.

With such an influx of customers, service was slow and from my table on the *terrasse* I passed the time watching a pair of climbers reach the top of the high granite crags on the far side of the wide waterway, neatly coil their ropes and then settle down to a picnic lunch on a sunny, if precarious, ledge.

Surrounded by such unexpected activity it occurred to me that this old commercial waterway, which enjoyed just a few economically fruitful years at the end of the 19th century carrying mostly sand, slate and wood, had found a new purpose as a medium for adventure.

Not stopping for lunch were the groups of students I would encounter sporadically along the way. Full of bonhomie and relief that the *baccalauréat* exams were finally over, they were enjoying an adventure on their doorstep by cycling the canal, probably as far as Lac de Guerlédan. They were overloaded with tents and home comforts, so progress was slow, but I envied their freedom to stop for the night at will.

Far fewer in number, and coming in the opposite direction, were those embarking on a pilgrimage from the port of Roscoff to Santiago de Compostela in north-west Spain. For them the canal and the towpath offered a long, convenient section of carefree walking that left plenty of room for contemplation.

PHOTOGRAPH: EMMANUEL BERTHIER/HEMISFR





Cycling beside the Nantes-Brest canal near Malestroit

My sedate adventure, motivated by curiosity as to what lay at the heart of Brittany, rather than on its splendid coasts, started in the city of Nantes in neighbouring Pays-de-la-Loire. The trip would not take me as far as Brest, but to Pontivy, where I would leave the canal and follow the River Blavet south to Hennebont on the coast near Lorient. I reckoned it would take me five days by bike to cover the 275 kilometres; a journey that lasted four weeks for barges when they were pulled by heavy horses.

The Île aux Pies (Magpie Island) near Saint-Vincent-sur-Oust marked a distinct change in the journey west. On the first day, across the level terrain at the mouth of the River Loire, the Nantes-Brest canal was green and motionless. The pedalling was easy and on the towpath between the curtains of trees that lined both banks it was refreshingly cool, in contrast to the hot and sticky conditions at the start in the city centre.

It was very pleasant but I yearned for something more and I was grateful that beyond the abbey town of Redon and the

junction with the north-south Canal d'Ille-et-Rance my canal gained a new charisma.

From then on I was for the most part cycling with the River Oust. Although its width was even and often bypassed by stretches of entirely straight and artificial waterway, it was essentially a natural and meandering river that gave a welcome sense of uncertainty as to what lay ahead.

Beyond the Île aux Pies I initially crossed an empty quarter where the towpath was effectively a causeway over an extensive area of marshland and wet meadow known as the Grogne. Matted with goat willow and alder trees, it looked like a waterlogged and impenetrable morass, and was undoubtedly a safe haven for the deer and wild boar which lived within it.

The only wildlife apparent to me as I cycled along were dark green cormorants sunning themselves on toppled trees, and statuesque herons that would occasionally flap clumsily into flight. Almost as motionless were the fishermen, spaced ➡➡➡





**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Market day at Malestroit; A traditional Breton house beside the towpath; A series of locks between Josselin and Pontivy; **BELOW:** The Château de Josselin comes into view; **FACING PAGE:** Bikes and boats are the best way to explore the canal



at regular intervals along the bank, who stared lugubriously at their bright, bobbing floats.

In this narrow, linear world right by the canal I had a sense of otherness. I was in the landscape but not part of it. Cycling behind the line of evenly spaced poplars, planes and oaks that defined the border of the canal world there existed a micro-climate where the wind was moderated and the hot sun was strained through the dense overhead branches. The cows grazing in the lush meadows and the fields of corn and swaying barley flickered past me like an early cinema reel.

As I travelled further west towards Malestroit the wooded sides of the Vallée d'Oust crept in and villages well out of reach of the flood-prone river were represented by spires poking above the trees on the low crest to my left.

It was the next morning when I rolled into Malestroit. Unusually for a medieval town it occupies the low ground and I was immediately struck by the lack of gates and ancient fortifications. Malestroit does, however, pay a price for being so close to the River Oust and it was clear that the town was still recovering from the severe floods of the previous winter that had threatened to wash away the stout stone road bridge over the river and canal.

PHOTOGRAPHS: PAUL LAMARRA, EMMANUEL BERTHIER/HEMIS.FR

**SAME PLACE, DIFFERENT PACE**

## Take to the boats on the Nantes-Brest canal

In truth there is really only one pace on the Nantes-Brest canal and that is slow. The obvious alternative to cycling is to hire a boat or, if you really want to take it easy, to charter a barge and crew.

The most popular section is between Redon and Josselin; to venture beyond Josselin would take more than a week due to the number of locks. Le Boat operates from Dinan, Nort-sur-Erdre and Messac (tel: 0844 334 8475, [www.leboat.co.uk](http://www.leboat.co.uk)) and Nicols (tel: 02392 401 320, [www.nicols.com](http://www.nicols.com)) has its base at Glénac on a branch of the canal that leads to La Gacilly.

To hire a motor launch that comfortably sleeps four will cost between €500 and €1,700 for one week. Fortunately there are always lock-keepers on hand to get you safely through the locks. The canal is open to boats between April and mid-October depending on the weather conditions.

The *Libje*, a Dutch barge operated by Ian and Jane Slade, is the only boat on the canal to offer fully catered holidays. Ian is the captain and guide to the local attractions and Jane is an award-winning chef who has mastered Breton cuisine. The accommodation is for four people in two cabins. Chartering the boat for a seven-day cruise costs €8,900 (tel: (Fr) 6 14 54 04 29, [www.libje.eu](http://www.libje.eu)).



[www.completefrance.com](http://www.completefrance.com)





I had timed my arrival to coincide with the Thursday morning market that fills the medieval core and large car park beyond. Pushing my bicycle up the narrow street to Place du Bouffay the atmosphere was so convincingly medieval that I half-expected to encounter frolicking jesters and pens full of live pigs. Against my fanciful expectations, the reality of stalls selling kitchen implements and nightwear was rather more mundane but the square, with its stone and half-timbered townhouses on three sides and 12th-century church on the other, evoked memories of centuries of weekly markets. Carvings on the church suggested that Malestroit was very familiar with acrobats and drunkards.

**The square, with its stone and timber-framed houses, evoked memories of centuries of markets**

Moving on from Malestroit was difficult. I finally remounted and headed west for Josselin, but only after a lunch of goat's cheese, tomatoes and a baguette bought from the market and eaten at the shaded picnic site between the river and the canal.

This 25-kilometre stretch was uneventful. The church on the outcrop at the Roc Saint-André was a rare instance of drama, but it came too soon to merit a stop. I was, however, willing to make a short tour from the towpath's compelling trajectory to visit Saint-Gobrien and its 11th-century church that was once sought out by lepers looking for a cure.

As I approached Josselin and the headwaters of the River Oust, the canal was noticeably climbing. While the locks grew deeper and closer together, my legs grew tired. Suddenly, the

town was upon me and the fatigue departed. Rounding what I thought was just another bend in a seemingly endless series, the Château de Josselin and its three towers loomed before me. Such was the sight of the walls rising in one graceful motion out of the rock to its high turrets that I wobbled trying to take it all in.

It was already late afternoon and the quayside below the château was busy with canal boats, their crews languid in the hot sun, waiting patiently to enter the locks while the much more energetic kayakers nudged around the top of the weir to catch its cooling spray. Josselin and refreshment lay at the top of the steep road that rounded the base of the château ramparts.

Ordering a beer at the bar-restaurant Le Guethenoc, on the shady side of the square, I savoured a breather before exploring the town. The château, so impressive from the canal, was no more than a façade when viewed from the town.

Five of the nine towers were flattened on the orders of Cardinal Richelieu in 1629 because its owner Henri de Rohan was the leader of the Protestant Huguenots. It was hard to imagine the grave events that took place in what it is now the tranquil heart of Brittany, but the château at Josselin was a powerful reminder. The most interesting artefact within its walls was the table on which Henri IV signed the Edict of Nantes – a controversial pact that granted French Protestants freedom of conscience in 1589.

When I left Josselin for Pontivy I was also about to swap the River Oust for the River Blavet, and it entailed a long climb to conquer the high ground between the two. I had planned on counting through the 72 locks between the towns, but lost count quickly as there were more than 20 in a stretch of canal less than five kilometres long. The large holding areas were a testimony to the long waits boats encountered to negotiate the staircase of locks. ➡➡





**ABOVE:** A young angler at the junction of the River Oust and the canal

Very few boats venture this far up, because it takes around four days to sail the 50-kilometre stretch to Pontivy due to all the locks, and I missed the jolly waves of the enthusiastic crews. Surrounded by such peace it struck me as ironic that the impetus for building the canal was a military one.

Napoléon Bonaparte backed the idea in 1804 as a way to break the English naval blockades of Lorient and Brest. Pontivy, at the strategic junction of the envisaged Nantes-Brest canal and the River Blavet, was renamed Napoléonville. As a military strategy it was much too slow, for it was another 32 years before the canal was fully open. Pontivy retains the military look that Napoléon envisaged, but its wide avenues, grid-iron street pattern and grey stone buildings jarred after four days cycling in the soft, green cocoon provided by the canal.

## Picnic in the shade

On my departure the next morning, the greyness of the town was mirrored in the cloudy skies and my host at the hotel delivered the worrying news that there was a rare red weather warning for later in the day. At first the weather seemed to improve and I risked a long lunch at the riverside resort of Saint-Nicolas-des-Eaux. The temperature, however, continued to climb and enervated everyone around me. Boys jumped into the canal from the railway bridges that once carried the now infrequently served Blavet-Océan line, while others allowed the weirs to pummel at their backs. I looked on with envy at the family picnicking in the cool shade of the Église de Saint-Gildas and the granite crag that seemed about to engulf it.

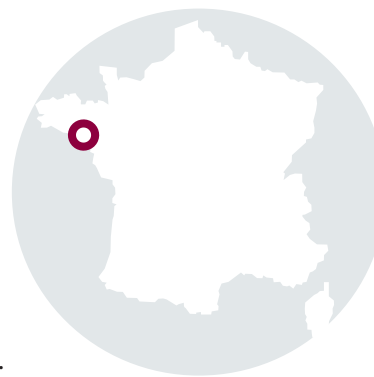
Yet for me, anxious to reach Hennebont before the storm broke, the hot clammy weather and the gathering clouds were a reason to push on without delay. I was going downhill towards the sea, but the River Blavet was in no hurry to get there.

Despite my unseemly haste I was still able to enjoy the Blavet Valley. No more than a crease in the Brittany landscape, the tree-filled landscape is easily overlooked by tourists on the coast but regarded by the locals as a haven from the crowds.

Huge raindrops at first brought relief from the heat and the dust, but they were to herald a storm that did indeed live up to its red warning. With moments to spare I propped my bicycle against a wall and sheltered in a café while the heavens inflicted a furious bombardment on Hennebont. It was an unexpected climax to my mostly sedate adventure. 🌧️

# Francofile

*Gear up for an exploration of Brittany's waterways*



## GETTING THERE

Paul travelled with Brittany Ferries from Portsmouth to Saint-Malo, with single fares from £215 for a car plus two passengers (tel: 0871 244 0744, [www.brittanyferries.com](http://www.brittanyferries.com)). He travelled by train between Saint-Malo and Nantes with Voyages-sncf.com, fares from £26 (tel: 0844 848 4070, [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com)). See page 23 for other travel details.

## WHERE TO STAY

**Popote et Polochon**  
4,6 Avenue de la Libération  
56200 Saint-Martin-sur-Oust  
Tel: (Fr) 2 99 91 52 51  
[popote-et-polochon.pagesperso-orange.fr](http://popote-et-polochon.pagesperso-orange.fr)  
Former schoolhouse with indoor pool. Doubles with breakfast from €70.

**Miraflores**  
Rue Édouard Entremont  
La Garmanière  
56140 Malestroit  
Tel: (Fr) 2 97 72 29 09  
[www.miraflores-malestroit.com](http://www.miraflores-malestroit.com)  
B&B with a pool and

beautiful garden. Doubles with breakfast from €65.

**Maison Keralio**  
Impasse de la Carrière  
56120 Josselin  
Tel: (Fr) 2 56 21 05 61  
[www.maisonkeralio.com](http://www.maisonkeralio.com)  
**Manoir** tucked away close to the town centre. Doubles with breakfast from €60.

**Hôtel du Château**  
41 Rue Général de Gaulle  
56300 Pontivy  
Tel: (Fr) 2 97 25 34 88  
[www.hoteldepontivy.com](http://www.hoteldepontivy.com)  
Modern rooms in the town centre. Doubles from €62, breakfast €8.50.

## WHERE TO EAT

**Marins d'Eau d'Oust**  
Route d'Île aux Pies  
56350 Saint-Vincent-sur-Oust  
Tel: (Fr) 2 99 91 37 21  
Have lunches and crêpes by the canal.

**Hôtel Restaurant de la Vallée**  
Saint-Nicolas-des-Eaux  
56930 Pluméliau  
Tel: (Fr) 2 97 51 81 04  
Traditional French bistro by the river.

## FOR AN APÉRO

**La Vieille Auberge**  
9 Place du Bouffay  
56140 Malestroit  
Tel: (Fr) 2 97 75 20 35  
The place to sit and watch on market day.

**Le Guethenoc**  
11 Place Notre Dame  
56120 Josselin  
Tel: (Fr) 2 97 70 69 67  
Welcoming bar and restaurant in the heart of medieval Josselin.

## ATTRACTIONS

**Château de Josselin**  
Place de la Congrégation  
56120 Josselin  
Tel: (Fr) 2 97 22 36 45  
[www.chateaujosselin.com](http://www.chateaujosselin.com)

**Musée de la Batellerie**  
12 Quai Jean-Bart  
35600 Redon  
Tel: (Fr) 2 99 72 30 95  
[www.redon.fr](http://www.redon.fr)  
Explore the heritage of Brittany's canals.

**Château des Rohan**  
1 Rue de Lourmel  
56300 Pontivy  
Tel: (Fr) 2 97 25 12 93  
[www.pontivy.fr](http://www.pontivy.fr)



**TOURIST INFORMATION:** Brittany tourist board, [www.brittanytourism.com](http://www.brittanytourism.com); Canals de Bretagne, tel: (Fr) 2 23 47 02 09, [www.canauxdebretagne.org](http://www.canauxdebretagne.org). The Nantes-Brest canal is now part of the Vélodyssée route between Roscoff and the Spanish border at Hendaye, [www.velodysse.com](http://www.velodysse.com)

PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL LAMARCA



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# Royal tour of AMBOISE

A medieval monarch guides **Carolyn Boyd** around the Loire Valley town that has been the home of kings and one of the world's great artists

Charles VIII is younger than he looks in his portrait, and taller than I expected. As he descends the staircase in front of me, his black cloak flutters in the breeze blowing in from the door of the tourist office. He smiles and greets me with a '*bonjour*'. In other circumstances, I should probably curtsy, but today King Charles isn't holding court, or goading Italy into a battle, he is showing me around his hometown of Amboise.

Charles – or rather Grégory – is one of the guides at the tourist office, while the others are dressed fittingly as Anne de Bretagne, Charles's queen. It's a fun way to spend an hour

learning about the complex history of Amboise, which was developed by Charles VIII in the late 15th century. Grégory – sorry, I mean Charles, for he stays in character the whole time – leads me out into the sunshine and over the road where the River Loire is gliding gently by.

As we walk beside the river, looking out towards the île d'Or in the middle, Charles explains how he came to be king aged 13 in 1483 and reigned for just 15 years before his death at the tender age of 27. It is a torrid tale of broken engagements, arranged marriages, Italian wars and ultimately a tragic end involving a bump to the head on a low door lintel on his way to



MAIN PICTURE: The Château Royal d'Amboise; TOP RIGHT: Grégory, the modern-day Charles VIII, and a painting of his real-life counterpart



a tennis match. His untimely death has gone down in lore, but Charles is keen to explain that his death could easily have had a more sinister cause, such as poisoning (apparently he was very small in stature, so unlikely to have bumped his head on a doorway).

Despite his short life, and his reputation for being rather hapless – his father Louis XI deemed that his formidable older sister Anne should reign as Regent until Charles came of age – he had a lasting impact on France. His marriage to Anne de Bretagne in 1491 bound the union between France and Brittany, and his quest to secure his right to the Neapolitan throne (which had been bequeathed to his father) brought with it the influences of Renaissance architecture to Amboise and the rest of France.

Charles leads me back towards the centre of the town and in among its narrow medieval streets, pointing out the few buildings that remain from his day. Sandwiched between some shops, the Tour de l'Horloge straddles the street. Charles explains that this was once the gateway to the town, while in the bijou Église Saint-Florentin, Charles points out that the stained-glass windows replaced the originals, which were destroyed during World War II. It is a charming little chapel, sitting modestly among the shops.

This is in contrast to the château, which well and truly dominates the town. Charles leads me to its side, to admire the walls from underneath. We peer up under the pretty balconies

and Charles explains how he was the great architect of Amboise. He was born in the château, which at the time was a medieval fortress. But having been inspired by his conquests in Italy, Charles transformed it into the palatial residence we see today. Walls and pillars were enhanced by the stonemasons and craftsmen that he brought back with him, and at the front he added the Tour des Minimes, a tower with a ramp rather than stairs so that horsemen could ride up to the top. Being without his trusty steed today, Charles and I walk up the ramp inside the tower and emerge into a beautifully manicured courtyard with the white stone château perched elegantly in the corner.

To the rear, an area of beautifully round topiaries leads up to the gardens behind. As we lean over the perimeter wall to see the town below, Charles explains how Amboise became home to the most famous Italian artist of all – Leonardo da Vinci. He arrived during the reign of François I, some years after Charles's unfortunate altercation with the door lintel, after the king had captured Milan and its surrounding area at the ➞



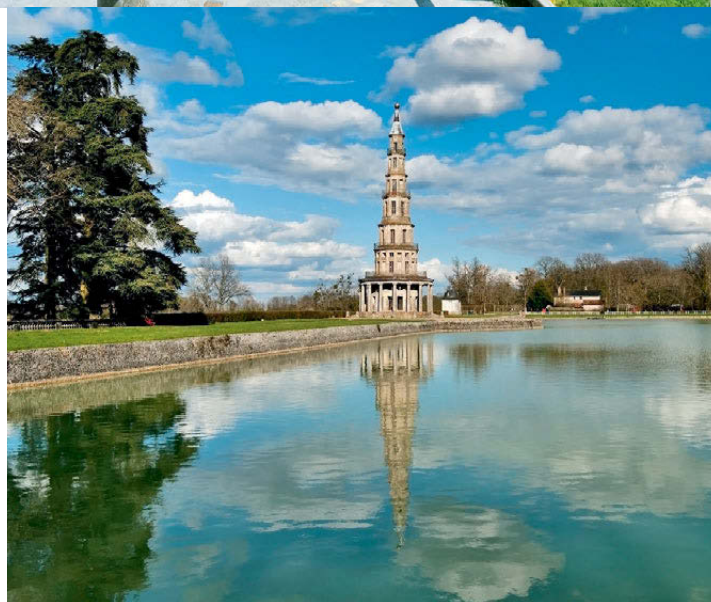


## { Da Vinci travelled over the Alps on a mule with three paintings, including the *Mona Lisa*

Battle of Marignan. Having been passed over by the powerful Médici family in favour of his great rival Michelangelo, Da Vinci travelled over the Alps on the back of a mule with three paintings in his possession, including the *Mona Lisa*, settling at the Château du Clos Lucé.

Charles points to the left and shows me the red-brick château hidden among the houses and trees. I'm surprised to see how different and modest it looks compared with the Château d'Amboise and the nearby Château de Chenonceau, which are so classically 'Loire' with their white limestone and turrets. Even more discreet, however, is his grave. Inside the tiny Gothic Chapelle Saint-Hubert, which is perched on the edge of the château's walls, a white marble stone with a black stone portrait marks his tomb. Though no one knows if it really is him under there (his remains were apparently moved here in 1863), it hardly seems believable that the final resting place of the man who brought us such visionary inventions and intriguing paintings would be heralded by this simple tombstone and a small plaque on the wall. His story is told in more detail over at the museum in Clos Lucé, where models of his famous inventions are on display.

The chapel is the final point on my tour with Charles VIII and it is time to bid farewell (perhaps he deserves a curtsy this time in thanks for his excellent tour) and head into the château. An exhibition leads you chronologically from the Renaissance to the early 19th century and in the first few rooms guides tell



SAME  
PLACE,  
DIFFERENT  
PACE

### Paddling about on the River Loire

One of the best views of Amboise is from the River Loire, so why not admire the château and the surrounding town in all its majesty from a boat? If you want to take it easy, you can book a trip on a traditional sailboat. With just 12 seats in each, the boat trips run by Millière Raboton do a choice of cruises, either for sunrise, sunset or a lunchtime picnic on one of the small islands along the river. Day trips cost €20 for adults, while dawn or sunset trips cost €36. (tel: (Fr) 6 88 76 57 14, [www.milliere-raboton.net](http://www.milliere-raboton.net)).

If you'd rather get your muscles moving with a trip on the river, why not take to the water in an open canoe or kayak? Several companies offer canoe and kayak hire either down the River Loire from Amboise, or nearby on the River Cher, where you can see the elegant arches of Château de Chenonceau (pictured) spanning the river (tel: (Fr) 6 37 01 89 92, [www.canoe-company.fr](http://www.canoe-company.fr)).



you how some of the furniture was designed to be taken 'on tour'. Monarchs were moved every ten days by their entourage, which in François I's case numbered some 10,000 people. Further rooms describe how the château also welcomed Kings Louis XIII and XIV, how it was used as a state prison and how it became the house of the Penthhièvre-Orléans family after it was inherited by Louise-Marie-Adelaïde of Bourbon, the great-granddaughter of Louis XIV.

Various owners have made changes to the château and it is now five times smaller than in Charles VIII's day. However, the periods of neglect and subsequent demolitions are nothing compared to what happened at the Château de Chanteloup, just outside the town, which has all but disappeared.

Built in 1713, the château later became the residence of Étienne-François de Choiseul, Louis XV's chief minister, until the king's courtesan Madame du Barry had him dismissed. Wings, pavilions and colonnades were added by the highly regarded architect Louis-Denis Le Camus from 1761 and the resulting estate, set in stunning 325-hectare gardens, was compared to Versailles. The cherry on the cake – a Chinese-style pagoda – was added in 1775; the pagoda, along with a lake, two gatehouses and the caretaker's house are all that



# Francofile

Take your own royal tour of Amboise



## GETTING THERE

Amboise is three hours' drive from Caen and five from Calais. Carolyn and her family travelled by ferry to Roscoff, which is 4hr 30min from Amboise. Brittany Ferries has crossings from Plymouth to Roscoff for £244 for four people taking a car and sharing an en-suite cabin (tel: 0871 244 1400, [www.brittanyferries.com](http://www.brittanyferries.com)). See page 23 for more travel details.

## WHERE TO STAY

### Les Fleurons

20 Rue de la Concorde  
37400 Amboise  
Tel: (Fr) 6 76 93 92 82  
[www.lesfleurons-amboise.com](http://www.lesfleurons-amboise.com)  
Charming B&B owned by British expats Tim and Carolyn Knowlman, who converted the town's 17th-century library into a four-room *chambre d'hôtes*. Doubles from €145 per night (min. two nights).

### Le Manoir Les Minimes

34 Quai Charles Guinot  
37400 Amboise  
Tel: (Fr) 2 47 30 40 40  
[www.manoirlesminimes.com](http://www.manoirlesminimes.com)  
Elegantly decorated manor house hotel with rooms from €97.30, breakfast from €16.

### Château de Breuil

37310 Chedigny  
Tel: (Fr) 2 47 92 55 88  
[www.sawdays.co.uk](http://www.sawdays.co.uk)  
Self-catering château 30 minutes south of Amboise and ideal for exploring the Loire Valley. Sleeps 8-14, from €1,000 a week.

## WHERE TO EAT

### Le Lion d'Or

17 Quai Charles Guinot  
37400 Amboise  
Tel: (Fr) 2 47 57 00 23  
[www.liondor-amboise.com](http://www.liondor-amboise.com)  
Gastronomic restaurant by the river, menus from €17.

### La Fourchette

9 Rue Malebranché  
37400 Amboise  
Tel: (Fr) 6 11 78 16 98  
Tiny but popular restaurant hidden in the backstreets.

## FOR AN APÉRO

### Chez Bruno

38-40 Place Michel Debré  
37400 Amboise  
Tel: (Fr) 2 47 57 73 49  
[www.bistrotchezbruno.com](http://www.bistrotchezbruno.com)  
Opposite the entrance to the château, this small wine bar has an excellent selection of wines and a few tables for evening meals.

## ATTRACTIONS

### Château Royal d'Amboise

37403 Amboise  
Tel: (Fr) 2 47 57 00 98  
[www.chateau-amboise.com](http://www.chateau-amboise.com)

### Château du Clos Lucé

2 Rue du Clos Lucé  
37400 Amboise  
Tel: (Fr) 2 47 57 00 73  
[www.vinci-closluce.com](http://www.vinci-closluce.com)

### Pagode de Chanteloup

37403 Amboise  
Tel: (Fr) 2 47 57 20 97  
[www.pagode-chanteloup.com](http://www.pagode-chanteloup.com)



**TOURIST INFORMATION:** Val d'Amboise tourist office, tel: (Fr) 2 47 57 09 28, [www.amboise-valdeloire.com](http://www.amboise-valdeloire.com); Loire Valley tourist board, [www.loirevalleytourism.com](http://www.loirevalleytourism.com)



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** The museum at the Château du Clos Lucé; The Tour de l'Horloge straddles the pedestrianised Rue Nationale; The Pagode de Chanteloup just outside Amboise

survive. As you stand at the top of the seven-storey folly (having climbed a set of very rickety stairs) and look out over the lake, the park and the landscape beyond, it is almost impossible to believe that the château ever existed at all.

After Choiseul died in 1785, the estate was sold to the Duke of Penthièvre, and then again in 1802 to Jean-Antoine Chaptal, a chemist and minister to Napoléon I. After Chaptal tried to sell it two decades later, it fell into the hands of La Bande-Noire. The so-called 'black pack' was a group of asset-stripping syndicates who dismantled châteaux in the aftermath of the Revolution and sold the materials as building supplies. They must have made a fortune because not even the foundations remain. In one of the gatehouses, an exhibition displays computer-generated graphics of how the château would have looked and its fate seems even more astonishing.

With two châteaux within Amboise and so many others surrounding the town, a visit to the pagoda is a welcome antidote to the château shuffle that visitors can so easily experience. The boating lake and the small Chinese garden offer quiet spaces to escape the crowds and there is also a collection of old-fashioned games on display. I spend an hour or so playing quoits, hoopla, skittles and croquet and getting a feel for what it was like to be a child from centuries gone by (no iPads here). While there are no costumes to add to the mix, I'm sure Charles, or rather Grégory, would be impressed at my efforts. 🍷



# How to... Holiday like the French

See France through the locals' eyes as **Paul Lamarra** and **Carolyn Boyd** suggest the best ways to enjoy a Gallic experience this summer

**I**t's August, which in France means *les grandes vacances*, when Paris empties and the Côte d'Azur fills up. When it comes to holidaying in France, the first people to recommend the idea are the French themselves, with only one in eight venturing outside *l'Hexagone*.

For some, the annual *congés* are a ritual experience that spans several generations; grandparents and parents try to give their own broods the happy holidays they once had and some families will have their favourite haunts to which they'll return year after year. Some of these destinations will be seaside resorts which – much like their British counterparts – have a timeless appeal. For others, meanwhile, the annual holiday is a chance to explore new corners of this huge country; nowhere is off limits with a motorhome, tent or the wonderful array of unusual accommodation now available across the country.

Yet wherever they stay or wherever they visit, the common denominator is that it is a holiday. It is perhaps the most tangible instance of the Republican spirit – no one misses out, regardless of budget. This means that by adopting some of the French ways in organising holidays, you can save money, eat well and see France as the locals do, and what could be more authentically French than that? ➡➡





**MIMIZAN-PLAGE:** Hidden among the trees and sand-dunes of Landes, between Arcachon and Bayonne, the holiday resort of Mimizan-Plage attracts French families and surfers to its enormous beach, which has sand that squeaks when you walk on it. The huge Atlantic rollers are fun to jump over, and lifeguards keep a keen eye out for safety. If the beach loses its appeal, hire bikes and take off into the mighty Landes forest or visit the Musée de Mimizan and the ÉcoMusée de Marquèze in Sabres to find out more about the local heritage (tel: (Fr) 5 58 09 11 20, [www.mimizan-tourisme.com](http://www.mimizan-tourisme.com)).





## MOTORHOMING

There is no holidaymaking tribe quite as tight-knit as the motorhoming or *camping-cariste* fraternity. In France, the tens of thousands of kilometres of road are the asphalt ribbons that bind the Republic together and motorhomers aim to celebrate every one of them.

It is the ideal way to dive in and discover the depths of the French countryside. With a fridge and a hob you can rustle up a *ratatouille* made with fresh ingredients bought from a local market or buy that pungent cheese without worrying that it will have to be eaten all at once.

In the UK a slow-moving caravan is usually considered a menace, but in France motorhomers are celebrated and embraced. The country is covered by a network of Flotbleu stations (tel: (Fr) 4 70 42 18 19, [www.flotbleu.com](http://www.flotbleu.com)) to replenish water supplies, empty the septic tank and sometimes charge the auxiliary battery.

One thing that characterises French motorhomers is a preoccupation with spending as little as possible. When you pull over at a motorhome park for the night prepare to be inundated with moneysaving tips and places to park for free. In addition to cheap municipal camping sites, enterprising villages are happy to provide free overnight parking in the hope that the money saved will be spent locally.

Taking that thinking a stage further is France Passion ([www.france-passion.com](http://www.france-passion.com)), an organisation that provides lists of olive farmers, vineyards, craftspeople and any business with a spare bit of land who are prepared to host motorhomes for free in return for at least being prepared to buy their produce direct. It is an ingenious win-win situation.

Domaine de la Gasqui near L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, for instance, is a small, family-run vineyard that provides a large, level grassy area next to its pre-Revolution *manoir*. In return for up to two free nights with a view over classic Provençal countryside, the owners hope that guests will buy at least one bottle of their



AOC Ventoux wines for around €8. It may be a regular supermarket purchase, but doing it this way adds authenticity and you get a chat with the producer thrown in.

To find out the locations, you must buy the annual guidebook (€29) and display the enclosed guestcard. Select a site that appeals and follow the discreetly placed sunflower symbols to the destination. Be aware that the scheme is open only to self-contained motorhomes, as the hosts don't have to provide any facilities apart from a parking space.

Here are a few of the companies offering motorhome hire: from the UK, JustGo (tel: 01525 878 000, [www.justgo.uk.com](http://www.justgo.uk.com)) and Capricorn Campers (tel: 01692 538 948, [www.capricorncampers.com](http://www.capricorncampers.com)); in France, France Motorhome Hire (tel: (Fr) 3 86 88 07 78, [www.francemotorhomehire.com](http://www.francemotorhomehire.com)) and Avis Caraway (tel: (Fr) 1 47 49 80 40, [www.aviscaraway.com](http://www.aviscaraway.com)).



{ With a fridge and a hob you can rustle up a *ratatouille* made with fresh ingredients



### SAINT-VALÉRY-SUR-SOMME AND LE CROTOY:

At the wide mouth of the River Somme on the north coast you'll find the charming twin resorts of Saint-Valéry-sur-Somme (pictured) and Le Crotoy. Both are very popular with the inhabitants of Lille and Amiens, and the hotels and self-catering fishermen's cottages are always busy in summer. A steam railway and a cycle path mean you can easily swap Saint-Valéry's history for Le Crotoy's long, sandy beach. The treat in both is to gorge on fresh unshelled seafood served straight on to paper place mats; it's messy but a lot of fun.



### RÉSIDENCES

After World War II, when it was finally accepted that everyone needed a two-week summer holiday, 'Bonnes Vacances Comrade' résidences spread rapidly across France, providing cheap and unfussy accommodation for the newly empowered worker with a holiday voucher from his paternalistic employer.

The tradition of holiday villages is still alive and well, and although cost-saving came before comfort in the early days, the accommodation is now affordable and comfortable. Indeed a majority of sites include pools, and some have flumes, saunas, golf and boating.

For the most authentic holiday village experience, opt for the Villages Vacances Famille (tel: (Fr) 4 73 43 00 43, [www.vvf-villages.com](http://www.vvf-villages.com)), which were established in the 1960s and originally offered a bare-bones approach of bed, table, four chairs and functional kitchen. Nowadays, the apartments and chalets are comfier, with at least a sofa and a TV, but French people are still happy to make their own bed and bring washing-up liquid and toilet rolls in the knowledge that it helps to keep prices low.

Meanwhile, companies such as Lagrange (tel: 0207 371 6111, [www.lagrange-holidays.co.uk](http://www.lagrange-holidays.co.uk)) and Pierre & Vacances (tel: 0870 026 7145, [www.pierreenvacances.com](http://www.pierreenvacances.com)) have developed this original model and offer a huge variety of options – from city apartments to ski chalets, and self-catering villas to mobile homes.

When it comes to traditional seaside accommodation, many résidences are found in resorts which are little known outside France and therefore can offer a sea view or at least a property near the beach at bargain prices. On the Côte

d'Azur, Lagrange has Les Terrasses des Embiez (£240 a week) close to Six-Fours-les-Plages. Pierre & Vacances is offering a two-bedroom apartment (pictured below) at its Cap Estérel village club from €613 a week and, nearer to home, apartments from €574 a week at its Belle Dune resort on the Baie de Somme.

For many French families the *résidence* continues to offer the perfect combination of self-catering and socialising around the communal swimming pool, playing games in the surrounding green space in a continuing spirit of comradeship. ➡





## MOBILE HOME S

Filling the car to overflowing and strapping a tent to the roof before heading off to a municipal campsite somewhere in France is largely a thing of the past due to the growth of the mobile home or static caravan. Spread over many hectares, the mobile home holiday parks aim to create a charismatic resort anywhere.

This option is widely available to British holidaymakers through companies such as Eurocamp (tel: 0844 406 0402, [www.eurocamp.co.uk](http://www.eurocamp.co.uk)), Canvas Holidays (tel: 0345 268 0827, [www.canvas.holidays.co.uk](http://www.canvas.holidays.co.uk)) and Siblu (tel: 0871 911 2288, [www.siblu.com](http://www.siblu.com)), but the inevitable consequence of booking through a UK operator is that you will be among British holidaymakers when you arrive on site. The chance of this happening is reduced if you book through a French operator, such as Yelloh Villages (tel: (Fr) 4 66 73 97 39, [www.yellohvillage.co.uk](http://www.yellohvillage.co.uk)) or Vacansoleil (tel: 0333 700 5050, [www.vacansoleil.co.uk](http://www.vacansoleil.co.uk)).

However, to truly embrace the notion of a French mobile home holiday, the trick is to identify the campsite you wish

to visit, and book your mobile home direct with them. Most tourist offices will have links to local campsites on their websites for you to peruse the options.

One of the best we've found is La Ribeyre holiday park (tel: (Fr) 4 73 88 64 29, [www.laribeyre.com](http://www.laribeyre.com)) near Murol, which belongs to the Sunélia group (another French operator worth investigating, tel: (Fr) 5 57 14 33 60, [www.sunelia.com](http://www.sunelia.com)). Set in the heart of the Auvergne mountains, the park has evolved from a small family-run campsite into a mini-metropolis of tents, mobile homes and wooden chalets.

In the past holidaymakers would have been content to splash around in the nearby private swimming lake, but parks such as this are now equipped with indoor and outdoor pools and a waterslide to persuade French families there is no need to go to the coast.

Indeed there is no need to leave the park at all as La Ribeyre tries to resemble a typical French village by providing a *boulangerie* and a weekly market, as well as a pizzeria.

Despite everyone having their own small home, terrace and barbecue,



a mobile home holiday is still expected to be a social event. On the first night at La Ribeyre, all the new arrivals watch a skit on local history performed by the campsite staff and chat over a pre-dinner glass of wine; all of which underlines the fact that France is a nation that still holidays together.

On a mobile home holiday park, the collective experience extends to *boules* and volleyball tournaments, nightly sing-songs and watching national television's favourite Saturday night cabaret altogether in the TV room. This is not only holidaying like the French, but also with them, and what better way to make friends and improve your French than that?

PHOTOGRAPHS: FOTOLIA; FRANK GUZIOU/HEMIS.FR; PATRICE HAUSER/HEMIS.FR



**GRANVILLE:** Situated on the west side of the Cotentin Peninsula in Normandy, Granville is neither a ferry port nor en route to one, so it tends to be overlooked by British visitors. The town is a fortified citadel, like its Breton equivalent, Saint-Malo, but Granville's appeal lies in the spectacular beach that stretches north. Here a new breed of active French visitor comes to windsurf, paddleboard and sail.





**BASSIN D'ARCACHON:** The Cap Ferret peninsula (not to be confused with Cap Ferrat on the Côte d'Azur) is a wonderful hideaway for the summer months. Cycle or walk through the pine trees or wander through the oyster farmers' huts to discover tiny, sandy beaches before enjoying platters full of oysters at a beachside restaurant (tel: (Fr) 5 56 03 94 49, [www.lege-capferret.com](http://www.lege-capferret.com)).







## LES HÉBERGEMENTS INSOLITES (QUIRKY ACCOMMODATION)

Fancy spending a night in a bubble, treehouse or a stargazing cabin? All these things, and many more unusual types of accommodation, have sprung up across France in recent years as the French have taken their love of camping one step – and in some cases several steps – further with ‘glamping’ (glamorous camping).

One Frenchwoman who is more familiar with the options than most is Denise Cabelli, who tapped into the trend in 2006 with her first book, *Le Guide des Hébergements Insolites*. She has since written two more books and runs the website [www.hebergement-insolite.com](http://www.hebergement-insolite.com).

Cabelli believes that their popularity has grown as a way of enhancing the traditional club and resort holidays. “The French tend to stay en masse in large complexes,” she says, “but with the unusual accommodation, holidaymakers can mix it up a bit and still go to the resorts, but also spend a night or two having a different experience. It gives their holiday a magical element.”

There are many magical places to stay, ranging from treehouses, and indeed

‘châteaux’ built among the trees (tel: (Fr) 6 30 64 26 00, [www.chateaux-dans-les-arbres.com](http://www.chateaux-dans-les-arbres.com)) to the Carré d’Etoiles stargazing cabins (*pictured below*) (tel: (Fr) 2 48 77 59 40, [www.carre-detoiles.com](http://www.carre-detoiles.com)), where you get a telescope to admire the stars through the roof.

Yet along with the romantic and magical places to stay, there are dozens of – shall we say – crazier ideas. Although the Hamster Hotel in Nantes closed a couple of years ago (tel: (Fr) 6 14 57 22 41, <http://uncoincezsoi.net>), its owners have gone on to create a whole host of differently themed abodes, including fishing-themed and Jules Verne-inspired apartments. Meanwhile in Paris, other hoteliers are finding success with the cinema-inspired 123 Sebastopol Hôtel in Paris (tel: (Fr) 1 40 39 61 23, [www.le123sebastopol.com](http://www.le123sebastopol.com)) and the music-themed Idol Hotel ([www.idolhotel-paris.com](http://www.idolhotel-paris.com)), which are both very popular with visitors.

Elsewhere, the ideas get ever more unusual, such as the enormous ecolodge in Burgundy shaped like a cow (*pictured above, see our October issue for the review*) (tel: (Fr) 3 85 79 59 08, [www.divertiparc.com](http://www.divertiparc.com)). Cabelli says: “There are the treehouses and yurts, which – because there are more and more of them – are becoming less unusual, but there are always people who do something new. The inventiveness is extraordinary.”

While these types of accommodation offer some *je ne sais quoi* (in the truest sense of the phrase), it also allows you to mingle with the locals. “When you stay in a hotel, you don’t meet anyone,” says Cabelli, “but when you stay somewhere unusual, it’s a way of seeing France from an unusual angle. It’s the chance to meet ‘real’ local people and get to know those who have created the accommodation.”

## Picnics

If there is one thing that characterises any French holiday or day out it is the *pique-nique*. The French love to lunch, but with picnic areas being so widely available, everyone has an option, no matter what their budget, and even where there are cafés and restaurants nearby, the owners don’t seem to mind.

It is so much part of the French way of doing things that political demonstrations held in Paris usually start with a mass picnic. On the weekends closest to 1 and 15 August, when the whole nation seems to be on the move, motorway service stations are full to overflowing with families enjoying a picnic.

At prestigious sporting events such as the Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe horse race at Longchamp in Paris, space is set aside for picnics and many chic ski resorts have a *salle hors sac*, where you can stash your picnic, eat it indoors and in some cases, even get it cooked.

The French picnic is more than just opening a packet of supermarket sandwiches and glugging back a fizzy drink. It is a thought-out affair of couscous and potato salads, charcuterie, cheese and, of course, wine and dessert. A well-prepared picnic French style is a liberating, almost addictive, experience. Before you know it, the cool box will be a permanent fixture in your car boot.







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# HUGUENOT HEARTLAND

South African-born **Pierre de Villiers** explores the religious heritage of La Rochelle and learns about his ancestors' dramatic escape from persecution in France more than 300 years ago



The Globe de la Francophonie public artwork in La Rochelle is the sort of attraction that you need to track down. Placed on a rather isolated stretch of the Esplanade Saint-Jean d'Acre in the *Vieux-Port*, the metal orb pays homage to French-speaking nations and features the inscription: *'Through the French song, it's our culture, our language and poetry that go around the world.'*

The words, by former mayor Michel Crépeau, neatly sum up why I find myself in the capital of Charente-Maritime for the first time. I'm here to learn about the people who carried French culture, language and poetry all the way to South Africa, the country of my birth. I'm here to dig for my Huguenot roots.

As far back as I can remember, having French heritage has been a big deal in my family. To go with my very French surname of De Villiers, my parents picked a very French name – Pierre. My sister is called Rochelle. The reason we have names that are more Calais than Cape Town is due to the Huguenots – French Protestants following the theological traditions of Jean Calvin who, in the 17th century, fled to all parts of the world to escape religious persecution.

Many moved to the Netherlands, from where a handful travelled to the Cape of Good Hope as part of a recruitment drive by the Dutch East India Company to bring skilled farmers to its trading post in southern Africa. One such Huguenot was my ancestor Jacques de Villiers who, on 6 May, 1689, arrived in the Cape with his brothers Abraham and Pierre on board the ship *Zion* after an arduous four-month journey. What happened next is part of De Villiers family lore, as Jacques (aka Jacob) and his siblings thrived under the African sun, planting more than 40,000 vines and introducing wine to South Africa.

It is what transpired before they arrived that is more difficult to piece together, as I'm discovering on a piping hot day in La Rochelle. I have started my search for answers in the French city because of a letter. Written in 1688 by the Chamber of Delft, the document – well-known among South African genealogists – allowed the De Villiers brothers to travel from Holland to Africa and 'earn their living as free men'. It describes the trio as experts in the laying of vineyards and mentions that they were born 'near La Rochelle'. Given its importance to the Huguenots, it makes perfect sense that the De Villiers' dash for freedom would have started in this most fascinating of seaports on the Atlantic coast of France.

Stroll around La Rochelle and it becomes clear why it's known as the *Ville Blanche*. As rays of sunshine hit the limestone façades of buildings, the city positively shimmers. The fact that it was one of the most important ports during the Renaissance is reflected in delightful arcaded walkways, timber-framed houses and the impressive town hall (which was badly damaged by fire in 2013). The heart of the city is the *Vieux-Port* – a beguiling mix of seafood restaurants, sailing boats and show-stopping sights such as the three iconic towers (Tour de la Lanterne, Tour Saint-Nicolas and Tour de la Chaîne), which acted as the first line of defence against invasion from the sea. They are imposing reminders that this White City was once stained by years of wars between Catholics and Protestants – conflicts that eventually forced the De Villiers brothers from their homeland.

To try to gauge the religious zeal that drove my ancestors I head to the Tour de la Lanterne, the only surviving medieval ➤

The Tour Saint Nicolas (left) and the Tour de la Chaîne guard the entrance to the *Vieux-Port* of La Rochelle





**SAME  
PLACE,  
DIFFERENT  
PACE**

## See La Rochelle from land, sea and air

While La Rochelle is steeped in history, it also likes to go forward at a rate of knots; whether it's sailing, windsurfing, kitesurfing, helicopter rides or skydiving. The École de Voile de l'ASPTT La Rochelle ([www.larochelle.asptt.com](http://www.larochelle.asptt.com)) offers year-round sailing lessons or, if you prefer paddle power, hire a kayak at Antioche Kayak ([www.antioche-kayak.com](http://www.antioche-kayak.com)) and explore the coastline.

Landlubbers may want to hop on a Segway electric scooter at Mobilboard Segway ([www.mobilboard.com](http://www.mobilboard.com)) or hire a motorised tricycle at the tourist office ([www.larochelle-tourisme.com](http://www.larochelle-tourisme.com)) that takes you on a 38-kilometre route past parks, gateways and bridges. When the weather is fine you can see the sights from a helicopter with Bat Air Atlantique ([www.heliberte.com](http://www.heliberte.com)). Go one further and jump out of a plane with Altitudes Parachutisme ([www.parachutisme.net](http://www.parachutisme.net)).

If you prefer slightly more sedate thrills, experience the joy of drift boat fishing, with a professional guide from YD Fishing ([www.ydfishing.fr](http://www.ydfishing.fr)) showing you how to reel in bass and pollack. Children, meanwhile, will be able to burn off energy in bumper cars and bouncy castles at Mini-Golf du Mail ([www.minigolf-larochelle.com](http://www.minigolf-larochelle.com)).

To complete an active day head for Place du Commandant de la Motte Rouge and take in stunning panoramic views of La Rochelle from the Grande Roule, the city's answer to the London Eye.

**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:** The Globe de la Francophonie and the Tour de la Lanterne; The collapsible pulpit in the Protestant history museum; The statue of Jean Guiton; A timber-framed house and market stalls

lighthouse on the Atlantic Coast. From the top, the pretty vistas are in stark contrast to the dank, gloomy interior where names and pictures carved into the rock walls tell of the misery of those held prisoner over the years. The Tour de la Lanterne is where the Huguenots murdered 13 Catholic priests in 1562.

Down the road I find more evidence of Huguenot religious fervour at the Cathédrale Saint-Louis in Rue Pernelle. Attached to the cathedral is a Gothic bell tower – the only remaining part of the Église Saint-Barthélémy, destroyed by Huguenots in 1568. The same year the Protestant-dominated city declared itself an independent Reformed Republic, which led to conflict with the Catholic government. Growing tensions eventually led to the city being besieged by Louis XIII's forces from 1627-28, a stand-off that produced one of the Huguenots' greatest heroes.

In Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, I spend some time with Jean Guiton, the city's mayor during the siege. Guiton's statue captures the bloody-mindedness of a man who helped La Rochelle to hold out against the royal forces for 14 months. Cape blowing in the wind and with his hand gripping a rapier sword, he strikes a heroic pose straight out of an Alexandre Dumas novel.

Despite Guiton's efforts, La Rochelle surrendered after famine and disease saw the population plummet from 27,000 to just





## { La Rochelle surrendered after famine and disease saw the population plummet from 27,000 to just 5,000

5,000. As part of the peace accord the Huguenots were able to keep their religious freedom as laid down by the Edict of Nantes, a 1598 proclamation by Henri IV granting Protestants considerable rights. However, the Huguenots were severely weakened by the conflict and were powerless to stop Louis XIV from revoking the edict in 1685 and persecuting Protestants.

As conditions became intolerable in La Rochelle many families looked to escape from France; families like the De Villiers clan. To find evidence of my ancestors' fight and flight in La Rochelle I visit the Musée Rochelais d'Histoire Protestante in Rue Saint-Michel, devoted to the history of Protestantism in the area. It is laid out around a courtyard next to a church once used by Catholic monks before it was offered as a place of worship for Protestants in 1798. Inside I find intriguing Huguenot artefacts: a collapsible pulpit – used during clandestine sermons – bronze portraits of Calvin, baptism documents and collection boxes.

What it doesn't have is any record of the De Villiers family, but given the destruction wrought on Huguenots and their places of worship in La Rochelle, that is not altogether surprising. A helpful museum worker points me in the direction of the Musée de la France Protestante de l'Ouest in Monsireigne to the north of La Rochelle. Here, the De Villiers name is known, in particular the three brothers who headed to the Cape in 1689. After some more digging and sifting through contradictory information online I come up with a likely back-story for the most famous South Africa-bound Huguenot family.

Pierre de Villiers, father of the three brothers, was born in Burgundy in 1615. At some stage he moved to Saint-Jean-d'Angély, near La Rochelle and stayed on a farm called Campagne. Exactly when is not clear, but there is a record of De Villiers marrying Elizabeth Secault in 1656 at the Temple de la Villeneuve, the main Protestant temple in the city. Eldest son Pierre was born ➡

## HUGUENOT HOTSPOTS

**LE MAS SOUBEYRAN:** This beautiful hamlet in the Cévennes mountains was an important location for the Protestant resistance in the 17th and 18th centuries. It is home to Le Musée du Desert ([www.museedudesert.com](http://www.museedudesert.com)) which focuses on the 'Desert' period in Huguenot history between the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the French Revolution.

**LEMÉ:** This town in Picardy has a Calvinist temple built in 1853 and restored in 1990 by volunteers. It is now a museum ([www.musee-leme02.fr](http://www.musee-leme02.fr)) that looks at the origins of Protestantism and its development in the surrounding Thiérache area, one of the first to accommodate Calvinism.

**NOYON:** The house in the Picardy town where Jean Calvin was born in July 1509 was destroyed during World War I but has since been restored and now houses the Musée Jean Calvin, celebrating the theologian's life ([www.ville-noyon.fr](http://www.ville-noyon.fr)).

**NÎMES:** The capital of the Gard *département* was the intellectual and educational centre for the Huguenots during the Reformation. The Grand Temple has been a place of worship for Protestants since 1803.

**ORTHEZ:** Jeanne d'Albret, mother of Henri IV and a Huguenot leader in her own right, lived in this town in the Pays Béarn province of the French Pyrénées. The eponymous museum in her former home ([www.museejeannedalbret.com](http://www.museejeannedalbret.com)) is devoted to Protestant history.







**ABOVE:** La Concurrence beach from the Tour de la Lanterne

the next year, followed by Abraham (1659) and Jacques (1661). To my astonishment I discover that Pierre had a fourth son called Paul, born in 1663.


When Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, Pierre de Villiers must have foreseen the hell that was to follow and probably insisted that his sons escape to Holland. As the king's dragoons closed in on the farm in 1688, all four brothers fled, only for a homesick Paul to turn back. It was a decision that cost him his life – Paul's date of death is listed as 1688. It's likely that Campagne was burnt to the ground and its inhabitants killed.

Meanwhile Pierre, Abraham and Jacques made their way to the Dutch island of Texel from where they eventually caught the *Zion* to the Cape in February 1689. A couple of things back up this sequence of events. The *Zion's* manifest shows the brothers had nothing but their bibles with them,

**{ The only indication that a place of worship was ever here is a street name**

indicating a fast exit out of La Rochelle, and the siblings named some of their farms in the Cape colony Bourgogne, Campagne and La Rochelle in what was surely a homage to their life in France.

Back in La Rochelle I look for any remains of the Temple de la Villeneuve, where Pierre de Villiers Snr got married and the brothers were probably baptised. Unfortunately, Louis XIV ordered its destruction in 1685 and the disused Saint-Louis hospital, built with the same bricks, now stands in its place. The only indication that a place of worship was ever here is a street name: Rue du Prêche (Sermon Street).

As my stay comes to an end, I again find myself in the *Vieux-Port* at the Globe de la Francophonie, the work of French sculptor Bruce Krebs, created in 2000. Even on this rudimentary representation of the world the vast distance between France and South Africa is apparent. I try to imagine the bravery it took to board a ship and head into the great unknown. As the sun starts to set over the city I can't help but feel a sense of pride at what the De Villiers brothers achieved in their adoptive home at the other end of the world. 

# Francofile

Explore the Huguenot heritage of La Rochelle



## GETTING THERE

**By road:** La Rochelle is 4hr from Caen ferry port and 6hr 30min from the northern ferry ports.

**By air:** La Rochelle airport is served by several UK airlines.

**By rail:** The train journey from London via Paris takes about 7hr (tel: 0844 848 5848, [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com)).

Renovated hotel just 200 metres from the beach of La Concurrence. Doubles from €89.

## Camping Municipal Port-Neuf

6 Boulevard Aristide Rondeau  
17000 La Rochelle  
Tel: (Fr) 5 46 43 81 20  
Two-star campsite close to the beach at Bay Head and the huge Minimes Marina.

lovers of seafood cuisine; pricey but worth it. Platters from €19.70.

## Crêperie La Galettière

9 Rue de la Chaîne  
17000 La Rochelle  
Tel: (Fr) 5 46 28 29 59  
Bustling restaurant famous for its delicious *galettes* and *crêpes*.

## WHERE TO STAY

Pierre stayed at:  
**Résidence de France**  
43 Rue du Minage  
17000 La Rochelle  
Tel: (Fr) 5 46 28 06 00  
Inspired by the opulence of an ambassadorial home, this five-star hotel has a lovely courtyard with heated swimming pool and a gourmet restaurant. Doubles from €110.

## FOR AN APÉRO Bar du France 1

Rue Sénac de Meilhan  
17000 La Rochelle  
Tel: (Fr) 5 16 85 27 72  
[www.bardufrance1.com](http://www.bardufrance1.com)  
Enjoy a cocktail at sunset at this bar on the upper deck of the *France 1* ship, which houses part of the maritime museum.

## WHERE TO VISIT

**Tour de la Lanterne**  
Rue sur les Murs  
17000 La Rochelle  
Tel: (Fr) 5 46 41 56 04  
**Tour Saint-Nicolas**  
Rue de l'Armide  
Tel: (Fr) 5 46 41 74 13  
**Tour de la Chaîne**  
Place de la Chaîne  
Tel: (Fr) 5 46 34 11 81  
Opening hours: Until 30 Sept, 10am to 6.30pm; 1 Oct to 31 Mar 2016, 10am to 1pm, 2.15pm to 5.30pm. Closed: 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec. Admission €5 each (€6.50 all three).

## Also try: Hôtel Saint-Jean d'Acre

3 Rue Saint-Jean du Perot  
17000 La Rochelle  
Tel: (Fr) 5 46 41 73 33  
[www.hotel-la-rochelle.com](http://www.hotel-la-rochelle.com)  
Hotel with a great location in the *Vieux-Port* at the foot of the three towers. Doubles from €82.

## WHERE TO EAT

Pierre ate at:  
**Restaurant Le 28**  
10 bis Quai Duperré  
17000 La Rochelle  
Tel: (Fr) 5 46 29 61 06  
[www.au28.fr](http://www.au28.fr)  
Chic eatery offering superb seafood and views over the *Vieux-Port*. Menus from €18.90.

## Musée Rochelais d'Histoire Protestante

2 Rue Saint-Michel  
17000 La Rochelle  
Tel: (Fr) 5 46 50 88 03  
[www.protestantisme-museelarochelle.fr](http://www.protestantisme-museelarochelle.fr)

## Restaurant Le Bar André

5 Rue Saint-Jean du Pérot  
17000 La Rochelle  
Tel: (Fr) 5 46 41 28 24  
[www.barandre.com](http://www.barandre.com)  
A local institution for

## Musée de La France Protestante de l'Ouest

Château du Bois-Tiffrais  
85110 Monsieigne  
Tel: (Fr) 2 51 66 41 03  
[www.bois-tiffrais.org](http://www.bois-tiffrais.org)



**TOURIST INFORMATION:** La Rochelle tourist office, tel (Fr) 5 46 41 14 68, [www.larochelle-tourisme.com](http://www.larochelle-tourisme.com)



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Take a stroll in...

# Charroux

On a plateau in the Auvergne countryside, **Paul Lamarra** explores a village with an independent streak that was a busy centre of commerce and the law in its medieval heyday



**O**n a summer's Sunday afternoon, Charroux-en-Bourbonnais, a *Plus Beau Village* north of Clermont-Ferrand, was busy with day-trippers, so parking on the edge of the village was at a premium.

A momentary downpour, which had sent the craftspeople manning their stalls in the narrow streets scuttling for shelter, had passed and the hot sun was causing steam to rise from every surface. The cobbles under my feet were slippery and awkward, and most people found that the only way to walk with comfort was through the medieval drainage channel that ran down the centre of the streets, which meant I had to jostle for right of way.

It was a serendipitous insight into what Charroux might have been like in its medieval heyday. Then its population was more than ten times its current 350 and as a centre for both commerce and judicial matters its medieval confines must have been full to the point of claustrophobic most days of the week.

As I looked at my map to take in the street names I realised that in such a humid atmosphere the medieval stench would have been overwhelming. Rue de la Boucherie (butchers) led to Place d'Armes and then into either Rue des Fossés (moat) or through the archway of the Porte de l'Orient to turn left into Rue de la Poulaille (chicken house). Add into that mix the odorous activities taking place on Rue des Tanneurs (tanners) and Rue de la Ferrallerie (blacksmith) at the very centre of this tightly packed street pattern and a new assault on all the senses would have been guaranteed at every corner.

Rue de l'Horloge, which leads away from the stout and square gate tower housing the belfry, would have been rather more sweet-smelling for this is where the skilled craftsmen lived in the creamy limestone and half-timbered townhouses that still survive from the 14th century. On the other side of the village, in Rue de l'Auditoire, were the court and homes belonging to the many legal advocates who plied their trade in Charroux. The assault on my senses, however, was thankfully limited to tasting the village's famous mustards and jams, and smelling soap and candles in the specialist boutiques now lining the streets.

My approach to Charroux that afternoon had been along a particularly narrow tree-lined road, which seemed to undermine the village's claims to have once been at a strategic crossroads linking Clermont-Ferrand with Autun and Lyon with Poitiers. Also, sitting as it does on a level-topped high point of the Peyrou plateau amid a gently rolling landscape of fallow fields and sunflowers, its defensive qualities, which apparently had been valued since Roman times, looked unconvincing.

The village's perimeter, I was told, had remained unchanged since the Middle Ages, when it was ringed by a high outer wall. As I walked around it, I enjoyed extensive if hazy views over ➞➞



**LEFT:** The village of Charroux-en-Bourbonnais looks over the Peyrou plateau;  
**ABOVE:** The interior of the Église Saint-Jean-Baptiste

PHOTOGRAPHS: BERTRAND GARDEL/HEMIS.FR DENIS CAVIGLIA/HEMIS.FR



the largely empty plateau. Looking to the south I could see over a low, wooded crest to the Puy de Dôme and the Chaîne des Puys, a range of dormant volcanoes.

Although Charroux didn't have the protection of crags and rivers, I now realised how the village's open outlook gave its citizens ample warning of an imminent attack and time to retreat behind its double walls, of which only a short inner section remains. Deep wells within the village greatly enhanced its chances of withstanding a siege, but the inhabitants' last desperate refuge was the interconnected cellars under the houses in the centre of the village around the Cour des Dames.

Despite its walls and towers, Charroux was devastated during the Hundred Years War against the English and again in the 16th-century Wars of Religion. Historians speculate as to whether it was during either of these two incidents that the 12th-century church of Saint John the Baptist acquired its peculiarly blunted spire. Many others believe cutting the spire down to size may have been a Revolutionary act of iconoclasm.

Inside what would have been the inner wall, I found the streets mazy and disorientating; the plain limestone walls of the townhouses offering little in the way of distinguishing clues as to my exact location. Eventually though I would arrive at the Cour des Dames; almost totally enclosed by two-storey buildings, except for a narrow opening, it was where people assembled to discuss the important matters of the day.

A charter granted in 1245 by the Bourbon rulers relieved Charroux's citizens of the need to pay taxes and gave them a great deal of independence. Lacking a feudal lord, the people



were free to make their own decisions and select a political leader and a judge from among their ranks. Ahead of their time women had the same rights as men. Unsurprisingly, Charroux embraced the 1789 Revolution and it was in the Cour des Dames that they would assemble to hear declarations and newspapers read aloud, and hold citizens' banquets to raise money for the revolutionary cause.

When I left by the Porte de l'Orient and returned to the edge of the village I was once again struck by the expansive views. The roads were busy with departing visitors, but within a few minutes they were empty again. Were it not for Charroux's remarkable history and evocative streets very few people would venture across the Peyrou plateau. 📍

## CHARROUX AT A GLANCE

**Stay the night at...** The Maison Condé, (tel: (Fr) 4 70 56 81 36, [www.maison-conde.com](http://www.maison-conde.com)), a 13th-century townhouse that once played host to Louis I, Duke of Bourbon in the mid-1500s. It has five atmospheric and elegant bedrooms, one of which is within the medieval Porte de l'Orient gatehouse. The hotel also has the village's best restaurant. Doubles from €72, including breakfast.

**Stop for a coffee at...** Rose-Thé in Rue de la Corderie (tel: (Fr) 4 70 56 83 26). There's not enough room for pavement cafés and people watching in Charroux, but the Rose-Thé makes up for that with its home-made pastries and artisanal ice creams.

**Stop for lunch at...** The Ferme Auberge Saint-Sébastien (tel: (Fr) 4 70 56 88 83, [www.fermesaintsebastien.fr](http://www.fermesaintsebastien.fr)), a short way out of Charroux. Sit in the formal dining room or out on the colourful *terrasse* for views over the rolling green countryside. Menus offer local specialities and traditional French dishes. Three courses from €26.

## WHAT TO SEE

● Simone and Claude Maenner have been keeping alive the Charroux tradition of mustard making since 1978 (tel: (Fr) 4 70 56 87 61, [www.huiles-et-moutardes.com](http://www.huiles-et-moutardes.com)). The mustard seeds are no longer grown locally, but the range of six mustards is based on old recipes found in local archives. Their shop in Rue de la Poulailleterie includes an exhibition on mustard making and oil pressing.

● The Musée de Charroux (tel: (Fr) 4 70 56 87 71), also in Rue de la Poulailleterie, documents the village's history from Roman and Merovingian times to the 19th century. The most interesting artefacts refer to the inhabitants' attempts to embrace the Revolution. Audio guides in English are available.

● The Maison des Horloges in Rue de l'Horloge (tel: (Fr) 4 70 56 87 39) is a permanent exhibition of 40 public clocks that have been salvaged from buildings dating from the 16th to the 19th centuries. The museum attempts to trace the history of French clock making from the Middle Ages to today.

● Tours of the interconnected cellars below Charroux are organised by the tourist information office.



**GETTING THERE:** The train journey from London to Vichy via Paris Bercy takes 6hr 30min and costs from €93 return (tel: 0844 848 5848, [www.voyages.sncf-com](http://www.voyages.sncf-com)); Charroux is a five-hour drive from the ferry port at Caen, off junction

14 of the A719 (tel: 0871 244 1400, [www.brittany-ferries.co.uk](http://www.brittany-ferries.co.uk)); The closest airport is Clermont-Ferrand.

**TOURIST INFORMATION:** Charroux tourist office, tel: (Fr) 4 70 56 87 71, [www.allier-auvergne-tourisme.com](http://www.allier-auvergne-tourisme.com)





## IN THE AREA

Charroux-en-Bourbonnais is in the Allier *département* and lies fewer than 40 kilometres from the capital, Vichy (pictured above). Marvel at the belle-époque architecture in this elegant spa town and take the apparently curative volcanic waters. The signature treatment is a *douche Vichy*, which involves being sprayed with naturally heated spring water while being massaged by four hands.

The more actively inclined can hop aboard the Vélorail de la Sioule (pictured below), based at Le Mayet d'École, where you pedal a small wagon carrying up to four people along an old railway line either south to Gannat (10km) or north following the Sioule Valley (16km) (tel: (Fr) 6 58 05 32 71, [www.veloraildelasioule.com](http://www.veloraildelasioule.com)).

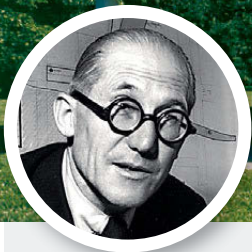
The Sioule is the Allier's only remaining wine-growing area. The *appellation d'origine contrôlée* is centred on Saint-Pourcain, 20km north of Charroux. The vineyards are among the oldest in France and were favourites of early French kings and the popes of Avignon. For an overview, visit the Musée de la Vigne et du Terroir in the town ([www.museedelavigne.fr](http://www.museedelavigne.fr)).



**CLOCKWISE FROM FACING PAGE:** The Porte de l'Horloge and the belfry; Shuttered houses in a quiet street; The Porte de l'Orient; Mustards at Simone and Claude Maenner's shop; The truncated spire of the Église Saint-Jean-Baptiste







It is perhaps appropriate that Le Corbusier, one of France's greatest and most divisive architects, believed in the possibility of reinventing oneself; he was not born with the name Le Corbusier, nor was he French by birth.

Charles-Édouard Jeanneret was born in 1887 in La Chaux-de-Fonds in the Swiss Jura, a few kilometres from the French border. The son of a watch engraver, he enrolled at La Chaux's art school in 1900 and was taught by architect René Chapallaz, who influenced his early work.

Wanting to expand his horizons, he left for Italy in 1907 where a visit to a Carthusian monastery in Florence ignited a belief that every man deserves to live well. The following year he visited Lyon, Strasbourg and Nancy, culminating in a trip in Paris, where he worked as a draughtsman for Auguste Perret, who pioneered the use of reinforced concrete.

After returning to La Chaux in 1909 to oversee the building of two villas that he had designed while on his travels, Jeanneret spent several years working in Germany and travelling around Eastern Europe. He returned to live in Paris in 1915 at the height of World War I and two years later opened a studio there. In 1919 he co-launched the art magazine *L'Esprit Nouveau* with French Cubist Amédée Ozenfant. In the first issue, Jeanneret adopted the pseudonym Le Corbusier, adapted from his maternal grandfather's name, Lécobésier.

LE CORBUSIER

## GRAND DESIGNER

While the modernist architect divides opinions, there's no denying his influence, as **Eleanor O'Kane** explains

In 1922 he met Yvonne Gallis, a model from Monaco, who would become his wife eight years later. Also in 1922 Le Corbusier exhibited in Paris a theoretical urban planning project entitled *Ville Contemporaine*. His imagined city would house three million people in 60-storey glass skyscrapers with an airport at its core. On a practical level, he worked with his cousin Pierre Jeanneret to create houses for Parisian clients, many of which are located in the 16th arrondissement and the suburb of Boulogne-sur-Seine. One of them, Villa La Roche, now houses the Le Corbusier Foundation. Another landmark is the Villa Savoye (pictured above) in Poissy, north-west of Paris. He also received commissions for public housing, for example at Pessac near Bordeaux.

Taking French citizenship in 1930, Le Corbusier continued to work on town planning theory in parallel with his architectural commissions. His *Plan*

*Voisin* in the mid-1920s, which had advocated razing parts of central Paris and replacing them with 60-storey towers, encountered fierce criticism. However, his 1935 paper *La Ville Radieuse*, had more tangible results, leading to the creation of the groundbreaking *Unité d'Habitation* communal housing scheme in Marseille in 1947 and a similar project in Nantes in 1965.

In 1937 the modernist designer was awarded the *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur*. He moved to the Auvergne in the early part of the war to work as a planner for the Vichy regime but returned to Paris in 1942 to re-open his studio. In the ensuing years his work took him around the world. He consulted on the design of the United Nations Headquarters building in New York and advised governments on urban planning in Brazil and India. In 1950 he began one of his most iconic projects, the chapel at Ronchamp in Franche-Comté.

Le Corbusier drowned on 27 August, 1965, while swimming in the Mediterranean at Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, where he often holidayed. It is thought he suffered a heart attack. With no heirs, he had spent the last period of his life planning a foundation to document his huge body of work, which includes painting, sculpture, enamelling, tapestry, furniture, books, journals and papers in addition to his designs for houses, public buildings, churches, stadiums and even cities. 🏠

PHOTOGRAPHS: PAUL KOZLOWSKI/OLIVIER MARTIN-GAMBLER/FLC/DACS; PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY; MANUEL BOUGOT





## THINGS TO SEE

### 1 La Chapelle de Notre-Dame du Haut, Ronchamp

Created, according to Le Corbusier, as a place of "silence, prayer, peace and inner joy", the stark, modernist chapel in Franche-Comté has a concrete roof inspired by a crab shell. A further building on the hill by Renzo Piano, co-designer of the Pompidou Centre in Paris, makes this a must for fans of contemporary architecture. If the setting were not dramatic enough, the Vosges

mountains make an arresting backdrop.  
Tel: (Fr) 3 84 20 65 13  
[www.collinenotredame.duhaut.com](http://www.collinenotredame.duhaut.com)

### 2 Le Corbusier Foundation, Paris

Discover more about the designer and see his drawings and plans in Villa La Roche, one of the sleek Parisian residences he designed early in his career. Built for Swiss banker and art collector Raoul La Roche, the villa is actually two buildings set at right angles to each other. Raised on concrete *pilotis* (stilts) with long strips

of window panes, it's classic Le Corbusier.

Tel: (Fr) 1 42 88 75 72  
[www.fondationlecorbusier.fr](http://www.fondationlecorbusier.fr)

### 3 Roquebrune-Cap-Martin

Le Corbusier spent summers in the Mediterranean resort, staying in a tiny cabin on the coastal path that he had made as a gift for his wife Yvonne. The only dwelling he ever designed to inhabit himself, the Cabanon was where he spent his final hours. The couple are buried in the cemetery above the village.  
Tel: (Fr) 4 93 35 62 87  
[www.roquebrunecapmartin.fr](http://www.roquebrunecapmartin.fr)

### 4 La Cité Radieuse, Marseille

Take a guided tour to see how the *Unité d'Habitation*, Le Corbusier's vision for urban communal living, became reality. The concrete concept is a soaring village containing 330 apartments in 23 designs. The rooftop has commanding views over the city and once had a running track and gym. Some *Marseillais* unkindly call it *la Maison du Fada*, or house of lunatics; love it or hate it, you cannot deny that its design was ambitious.  
Tel: (Fr) 8 26 50 05 00  
[www.marseille-tourisme.com](http://www.marseille-tourisme.com)



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# BON APPÉTIT

*The best of French gastronomy  
at home and away*

## Queen of cuisine

The world's best female chef, **HÉLÈNE DARROZE**, tells **Caroline Bishop** how she juggles family and career to achieve success in London and Paris

**A**s if Michelin-starred French chef Hélène Darroze weren't already successful enough, she has just gone stellar – and it appears this new status will take a bit of getting used to. “Two days ago in Paris a young girl stopped me and said, ‘oh my God, you are my role model,’ I dream to be you!” Darroze tells me with an uncomfortable laugh. “And I said, ‘what do you want me to say?’ Of course I was happy!”

This extra level of fame comes because the 48-year-old has been named the 2015 Veuve Clicquot World's Best Female Chef, an accolade previously held by esteemed names including fellow Frenchwoman Anne-Sophie Pic, Basque chef Elena Arzak and Brazil's Helena Rizzo. She received the award in June at a ceremony in London for The World's 50 Best Restaurant Awards, in front of cooking's finest talents. “I was a bit stressed and intimidated,” she admits.

The honour reflects the success of the two restaurants she runs simultaneously: Hélène Darroze in the sixth arrondissement of Paris, which she opened in 1999, and Hélène Darroze at the Connaught in London, where she has been since 2008.

It's a hard-earned achievement. Dividing her time between the restaurants, the chef leads a peripatetic life moving herself and two young daughters between the two capitals on a schedule that must make Eurostar feel like a third home.

But Darroze loves it, she tells me from her office at The Connaught. “When the girls were little and we'd spend one week in a place and one week in another, every Friday travelling one way or the other, that was ideal.”

These days her daughters – Charlotte, eight, and Quiterie, six, both adopted from Vietnam – are in school, so they have been more rooted in London, but Darroze still makes the cross-Channel journey every few days. ➤➔







As she juggles being a world-class chef and a single mother, Darroze is finding the time to write another cookbook, work on a secret project and help to build an orphanage and school in Vietnam through the foundation she created with fellow chef Caroline Rostang and friend Laeticia Hallyday, wife of pop star Johnny Hallyday. Darroze is godmother to the Hallydays' daughter Joy, also adopted from Vietnam. Earlier this year she also judged the sixth season of French TV's cooking contest *Top Chef*.

So whether she likes it or not – “I cannot complain!” – Darroze will have to get used to being a role model for women in the industry, who are still in a significant minority. It's for that reason that Darroze believes a gender-focused award such as World's Best Female Chef is necessary. “Like every minority sometimes you have to encourage them, to put them on the scene. That's what the award did and it's really good,” she says.

This encouragement is all the more necessary when you consider the barriers that women still face in the industry. Not in entering the profession; Darroze says she “never had a problem in a kitchen because I was a woman. On the contrary, all the doors were really open.”

On accepting her award she pointed out that increasing numbers of women were entering culinary schools and professional kitchens. From September, her own restaurant in Paris will have more female than male chefs for the first time, not because she designed it that way but because more women are applying for the positions.

However, keeping them in the profession to a point where they can attain Darroze's dizzy heights is still the issue, due to the age-old clash between career and family. Darroze managed both, but she adopted her children at the age of 40, after doing the hard work of establishing a career and earning her Michelin stars (at the age of 35, she became the only female French chef to hold two stars, before Pic trumped her with three in 2007).

“I couldn't have been a mum at 30, or I wouldn't have done what I did,” she says. “If I had had a man in my life when I was 30, at a time when I had to work very hard in the kitchen, and if this guy wanted to have children, perhaps I would have made the choice to have that kind of life, I don't know.”

Must it be a choice between the two? Darroze is realistic about the demands of the job. “When you reach a certain level and you work in a certain type of cuisine, unfortunately you must be here in the evening, that's the most important time of the day,” she says. “When you want to become a recognised chef with a Michelin star you have to work these hours.”

It seems old-fashioned that this stark choice still falls mainly on women, but judging by Darroze's experience of the industry, that's what happens. In the past she has tried to facilitate the

**Darroze's restaurant in Paris will soon have more female than male chefs for the first time**

working life of mothers in her own teams by cutting back their hours, but that means cutting their responsibility for evening service, too. “It's not the same job. So they are not very happy with this kind of position because it's a little bit frustrating.”

So, I suggest, the only solution is for the chef to have an understanding partner who can take on the child care? “That's the best situation!” she says with a laugh.

For Darroze, having children at 40 and at the top of her career ladder meant that she had already assembled the support network and the financial means she needed. “I chose to have children at a stage when I knew that it would be easy to delegate, first because I now have the spirit to do so and secondly because I have the people to delegate to. I knew that





**FAR LEFT AND ABOVE:** The two-Michelin-star Hélène Darroze at the Connaught restaurant in London; **CENTRE:** Two of Darroze's creations: Ravioli of Cévennes onion, black truffle and barley consommé, and a pineapple dessert with Tasmanian and long pepper mousse, tonka bean ice cream and coconut crumble

at this time in my professional life it was possible for me to perhaps take one day off."

Given the tough choices the job imposes, would she want her daughters to follow her into the industry? "I have this wonderful opportunity to live my passion through my work," she says, "so I hope it will be the same for them. If it's in the kitchen, OK, I will be happy and I will help them, but if it's not I will also be happy."

If her children do become chefs, they will be continuing the family tradition into a fifth generation. Darroze grew up in the Landes *département* of south-west France, where her family had run a restaurant in Villeneuve-de-Marsan since 1895. She was particularly close to her grandmothers, one of whom worked in the restaurant alongside Darroze's grandfather and taught her to cook. "They inspired me a lot," she says. "They also taught me a lot of values; of generosity, of sharing, of authenticity, of honesty."

But despite this background, Darroze didn't grow up wanting to be a chef. After completing her *baccalauréat*, she chose to study business at the École Supérieure de Commerce in Bordeaux. "My mother had a pharmacy, and I also grew up in this kind of world," she says by way of explanation.

On graduating, she applied to various hotels in France, looking to enter the business side of the hospitality industry. Darroze ended up (with a little networking help from her father) joining the staff of three-Michelin-star chef Alain Ducasse at the Louis XV restaurant in Monaco on a three-month, office-based internship.

In fact, the work was "a little bit boring", she admits with a laugh. "But I was very curious. I remember Alain Ducasse, on the first day I met him, telling me, 'you have to notice everything'. And I followed his advice; I noticed everything, every single detail."

Realising that she wanted to be a chef, Darroze stayed with Ducasse for a further three years before heading back to the Landes to take over the family restaurant from her father. Though she closed that business in 1999 to launch herself in Paris, she still draws on her family's ethos and approach to cooking, if not on the recipes themselves. "I use the values, the spirit and the philosophy of them," she says. "I dream to have a restaurant, a bistro, one day, with this kind of food."

Landes products feature heavily in her cooking; she still uses suppliers from the area and says her favourite dish to cook at home is a Landes chicken, simply roasted. It's a meal she and her already cosmopolitan daughters gobble up as readily as they do Japanese sushi, Vietnamese *phở* noodle soup and (Darroze's guilty pleasure) Krispy Kreme doughnuts.

After all, while she may treasure her roots, Darroze is now an international chef who is as comfortable in Britain as she is in France. Which capital has the more exciting food scene? "The two are so exciting now but in different ways," she replies diplomatically. "Paris is full of openings, but the restaurants concentrate on the French spirit, on French food. London is the contrary. It is so open to the world, it's so international." It's a combination that seems to suit Darroze down to a T. [www.helenedarroze.com](http://www.helenedarroze.com)





## FOOD ONLINE

What could be nicer than having the authentic flavours of France delivered to your door at the click of a mouse?

### Fresh from France

A whole online grocery shop of small French producers gathers under the banner of **France of Gastronomy**. Founder Mickaël Paul offers wines, terrines, jams, cheeses and *saucissons* and lots of other goodies from smallholders located all around France. He also makes up festive hampers with food and wine. Sample price: €7.90 for 400g pork *saucisson*; €3.70 for 160g Charola cheese from Burgundy (delivery charges vary). [www.franceofgastronomy.com](http://www.franceofgastronomy.com)

### Brittany bakery

You can order all sorts of French breads and cakes from the online service of **The Bertinet Kitchen**. Breton baker Richard Bertinet now writes books on baking and runs a cookery school in Bath. He will also supply yeast blocks, sourdough starter and pizza dough for you to do your own baking. Sample price: £5.60 for a 1.2kg sourdough loaf (£4.85 for standard delivery). [www.thebertinetkitchen.com](http://www.thebertinetkitchen.com)

### Heaps of hampers

If you want to receive a selection of your favourite French delicacies as a one-off treat, or be sent a monthly gourmet surprise, **Bonjour French Food** can oblige. If you subscribe, co-owner Véronique Poulou selects the contents of a surprise hamper that is sent out each month, or you can make a single purchase of either a charcuterie or a vegetarian hamper. Sample price: from £29 (inc p&p) for a hamper containing six or 11 charcuterie products. [www.bonjourfrenchfood.com](http://www.bonjourfrenchfood.com)

### Marvellous macarons

**Mademoiselle Macaron's** site is simplicity itself. You just drag and drop each colour and flavour of *macaron* you want into a virtual box of either six, 12 or 18 pieces, make your way to the checkout



and wait for the doorbell to ring. Founder Rachel Hanretty trained in Paris before opening a café and patisserie in Edinburgh. Sample price: box of 6 for £7.50; 12 for £12; 18 for £16.50, tower £40 (postage £4.99). [www.mademoisellemacaron.co.uk](http://www.mademoisellemacaron.co.uk)

### Truly tempting

The philosophy behind the **Truly French** website is to make the specialties that you have enjoyed on holiday in France available at home. Owner Kristell Darchy was born in Paris and lived in Brittany before coming to the UK so she knows the sort of products that will inspire fond memories. Sample price: £4.50 for lobster bisque (delivery charges based on weight of order). [www.trulyfrench.com](http://www.trulyfrench.com)

### Provençal produce

Fond memories of a family delicatessen shop in Provence led to the creation of online shop **Provence Delights**, which offers a small, hand-picked selection of relishes, fruit nectars and biscuits. Sample price: relishes from £7, nectars from £3.90, biscuits from £3.50 (postage £5.50). [www.provence.london](http://www.provence.london)

## How to... MAKE BISCUIT DE SAVOIE BY CHEF FRANCK RAYMOND

"This light cake is from my home region of Savoie and is easy to make. It is thought to date from the 14th century when the Amédée



VI, Count of Savoy, was asked to create a cake as light as a feather for the visit of Charles IV of Luxembourg.

To start with, warm the oven to 150°C/300°F/gas mark 2, and then separate seven eggs, putting the whites and yolks in different bowls, and then beat the egg whites until they are stiff.

Next, mix 250g sugar with the egg yolks and then, little by little, add 200g flour and half a sachet (1.5tsp) of baking powder. Now fold in the egg whites, gently lifting the batter as you go. Continue to mix everything together about two or three times more and then sprinkle some flour on top.

Pour the mixture into a plain or moulded baking tray lined with greaseproof or baking paper, and place in the oven for 40 minutes. Enjoy!"

Franck Raymond is the chef-owner of the Augustine Kitchen in Battersea, south-west London. Named after Franck's grandmother, the restaurant showcases regional French dishes, such as *Reblochon* tart, gratin of *crozet* (Savoyard pasta) and a pork shank which has been cooked slowly for 36 hours. Tel: 0207 978 7085 [www.augustine-kitchen.co.uk](http://www.augustine-kitchen.co.uk)





# Wine & food matching in... LORRAINE

**A**s a delicious party snack, amuse-bouche, entrée or main course, *quiche Lorraine* must be the most versatile of savoury dishes. The word 'quiche' is closely related to the German *kuchen*, for cake or tart, reflecting the dish's northerly provenance in France and its similarity to Alsace's *tarte flambée* – *flammekueche* in Alsatian dialect. Indeed, until the 19th century, *quiche Lorraine* would have been both thinner and crispier than it is today and therefore more similar to the Alsatian speciality.

Crème fraîche and eggs are whisked up together and poured over fried lardons into a pastry base. Spring onions are a seasonal ingredient, and cheese – although not part of the original recipe – is now included by many chefs.

When matching wine with *quiche Lorraine*, most sommeliers will look to the dry whites from nearby Alsace, to chime with the dish's savoury flavours and to freshen its creamy texture. Pinot blanc and auxerrois are perhaps the best pairings: less extroverted than many Alsace *cépages*, they combine body with zing, and usually represent excellent value. Dry pinot gris is harder to find, but also matches well. The acidity of riesling cuts through the quiche's richness, but look for a young dry bottle from the Lower Rhine. For red wine drinkers, Alsace's fruit-



Metz, the capital of Lorraine

driven, sappy pinot noirs are the perfect foils.

However, if the best place to eat quiche is Lorraine, the region's finest wines also make excellent partners for its signature dish. Try the fresh auxerrois and the fuller-bodied dry pinot gris whites from the Moselle vineyards; floral red gamays that give many Beaujolais-Villages wines a run for their money; or delicate pinot noirs with scents of fresh cherries.

Although they are less common in landlocked Lorraine, I can't resist quiches that include generous helping of seafood, but these require a full-flavoured, robust white wine, such as a chardonnay from Burgundy's Mâcon or Jura's Arbois *appellations*. The leeks in *quiche aux poireaux* pair better with sauvignon blancs from the Loire Valley: Sancerre, Pouilly-Fumé, Menetou-Salon or Touraine white.

Dominic Rippon



**DID YOU KNOW?** In 1985, French astronaut Patrick Baudry took a bottle of 1975 Château Lynch-Bages vintage wine on Nasa's Discovery space shuttle. The hotel is offering special packages to mark the anniversary, visit [www.cordeillanbages.com](http://www.cordeillanbages.com)

## WINES OF THE MONTH BY SALLY EASTON, MASTER OF WINE

### SNAP IT UP

**Calvet, Reserve Sauvignon Blanc 2014, Bordeaux Blanc**

This Bordeaux competes head-on with New Zealand sauvignon blanc. It has a zesty, pick-me-up vibrancy and fresh acidity, with notes of cut-grass, herbs and asparagus, all crunchy and fresh. The palate kicks off with lemon sherbet tingliness and mellows to a rounder citrus fruit than the perkiness of the nose suggested. All in all, it provides really good varietal aromas and flavours.

**Drink with:** Nibbles as an aperitif.

**Waitrose, £8.99**

**Tel: 0800 188 881**

**[www.waitrosewine.com](http://www.waitrosewine.com)**



### WEEKEND TREAT

**Domaine Couly-Duthell, Les Gravières d'Amador Abbé de Turpenay 2013, Chinon**

Cabernet franc from the Loire deserves to be more in favour. This example is almost purple with the brightness of youth, as exuberant aromas of raspberry, graphite and a hint of green pepper exude from the glass. The palate is light on tannin and big on fresh, crunchy, just-picked summer berry fruits. The body is smooth, fine-textured and wholesome, and it finishes with a herbal tweak of complexity.

**Drink with:** Lighter dishes, salads and non-oily fish.

**Noel Young Wines, £11.95**

**Tel: 01223 566 744**

**[www.nywines.co.uk](http://www.nywines.co.uk)**



### TIME TO CELEBRATE

**Domaine Bruno Sorg, Riesling Pfersigberg 2012, Alsace Grand Cru**

The well exposed east-south-east facing slopes of Pfersigberg accumulate plenty of sunshine to bring a warm ripeness to the fruit here. Riesling does particularly well, and this one shows seashell and aromatic spices on the nose, along with lime pith, citrus, pebbly and succulent juice-dripping peachiness. Riesling's steely freshness and characteristic intensity and richness of flavour shine through in this young but complex wine.

**Drink with:** Contemplation.

**Highbury Vintners, £24**

**Tel: 0207 226 1347**

**[www.highburyvintners.co.uk](http://www.highburyvintners.co.uk)**









# Make the perfect... Pêche Melba

Celebrate summer with the legendary chef Escoffier's homage to an opera star, says **Rosa Jackson**

**L**ike prawn cocktail and *steak au poivre*, peach Melba fell gently out of fashion some time towards the end of the 20th century. Though it might still appear on dinner tables from time to time, this dessert of poached peaches, vanilla ice cream and raspberry sauce feels slightly tongue-in-cheek, especially when topped with whipped cream and toasted almonds. Yet, made with the elegant simplicity that legendary chef Auguste Escoffier intended, it's a marvel of complementary flavours and textures that is perfect for celebrating the summer in retro style.

Unlike many other great French dishes, *pêche Melba* has a story behind it that appears not to be fictional. In a handwritten letter that has been preserved, Escoffier described how he created this dessert in 1894 for the Australian opera singer Dame Nellie Melba. A long-term guest of the Savoy Hotel in London, where Escoffier worked, Melba invited him to hear her sing in Wagner's opera *Lohengrin*. To show his appreciation the chef concocted this dessert, which he presented on a swan carved out of ice, in reference to the opera's swan knight, and decorated with spun sugar.

When Escoffier moved to the Carlton Hotel in 1899, peach Melba became a regular fixture on the menu because it was so easy to assemble. Over the years, Dame Nellie Melba would become better known for the dessert she inspired than for her voice.

For peach Melba to merit its name, there can be no shortcuts. Escoffier used ripe white peaches poached in a light sugar syrup, though the more acidic yellow peaches would do, as long as



Food critic and cookbook author Rosa Jackson lives in Nice, where she runs the cookery school Les Petits Farcis and writes about food for publications worldwide.

they are in season. Before moving to France I had never encountered a truly ripe peach: one whose juice drips down your chin at the first bite. However, the peach should not be so ripe that it collapses when you cut it in half, as is sometimes the case in Nice.

I don't think it is necessary to make your own ice cream, but the one you use should contain nothing more than egg yolks, cream, sugar and real vanilla bean – no vegetable fats or stabilisers.

As for the raspberries, they are in season at the same time as peaches, so need only to be puréed and strained, and mixed with enough icing sugar to balance their acidity.

Most importantly, this dessert should remain minimalist, with nothing more than a light coating of raspberry coulis over the ice cream and peach. Add whipped cream and you no longer have a peach melba but an ice-cream sundae. 🍷

## PERFECT PEACH MELBA

I am horrified at the amount of sugar in most peach Melba recipes. To preserve the delicate flavour of the peach, the sugar syrup should be light; ten per cent sugar in proportion to the water is enough. If you happen to find flat white peaches, they work beautifully in this recipe.

SERVES  
4

- 4 ripe peaches, preferably white
- 4 cups/1 litre water
- 4oz/100g white sugar
- 4 scoops vanilla ice cream
- 8oz/200g raspberries
- 1-2tbsp icing sugar

**1.** Cut the peaches in half and remove the stone (this should be easy to do if they are ripe). Place the peach halves in a large bowl and cover with boiling water from the kettle. Leave for a few seconds, then remove from the water with a slotted spoon and gently peel off the skins.

**2.** In a medium saucepan gently heat the water and sugar until the sugar is dissolved and the syrup comes to a simmer. Place the peaches in the syrup and poach at a very low simmer for five minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and place two peach halves in each dish.

**3.** Press the raspberries through a food mill using the finest setting and sweeten to taste with the icing sugar. If you do not have a food mill, purée with a hand blender or in a food processor, then strain to remove the seeds and sweeten to taste.

**4.** Just before serving, place a scoop of vanilla ice cream in each dish and top with the raspberry coulis.



# 1 Château de la Treyne

If you're looking for somewhere on holiday to celebrate a special anniversary, the Château de la Treyne is the stuff of fantasy. It's certainly not cheap, but you're paying for not only a memorable gastronomic experience, but also what is called the *cadre* – the surroundings.

Built in the 14th and 17th centuries on the left bank of the River Dordogne between the villages of Lacave and Pinsac, the château is set in a formal garden surrounded by 120 hectares of woods and parkland. Depending on the weather, you can dine on the terrace that overlooks the quietly flowing river or inside in the Louis XIII dining room.

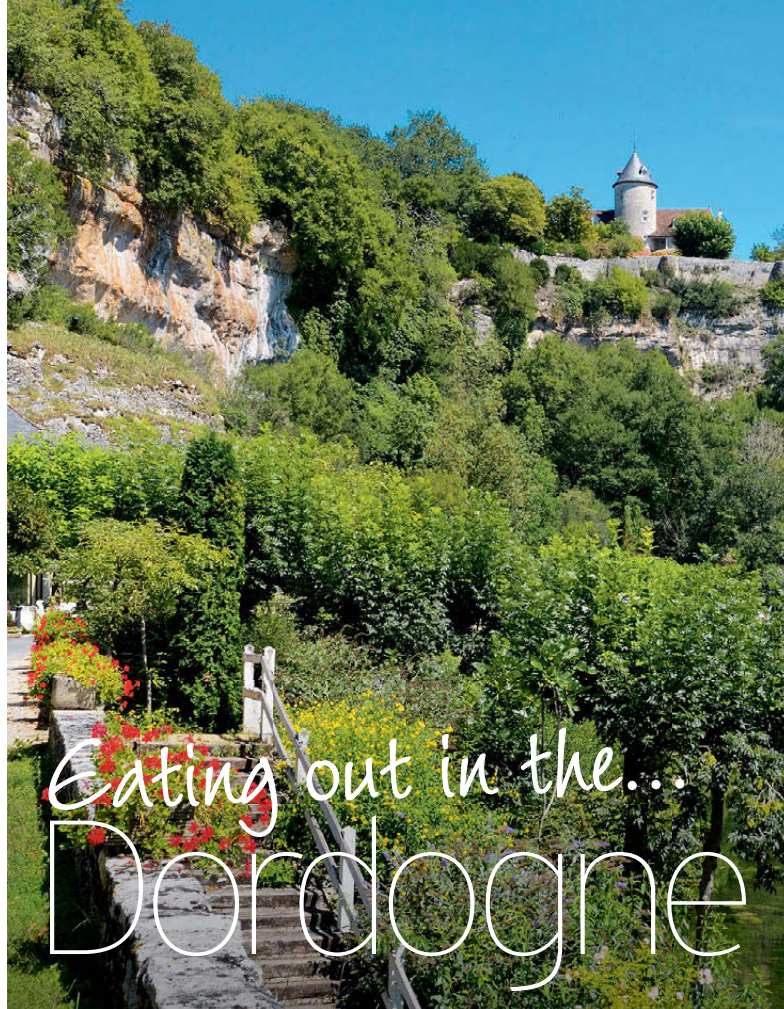
The welcoming ex-Parisian hosts, Philippe and Stéphanie Gombert, have created an environment that is elegant and distinctive without being at all intimidating. Their *périgourdin* chef, Stéphane Andrieux, was awarded a Michelin star in 2001 for his upmarket regional cuisine. Vegetarians and food allergies are accommodated without fuss or stigma, and the helpful staff guide you unobtrusively through each fabulous culinary creation.

As an entrée, for example, the combination of raw and cooked green asparagus with a perfectly poached egg in an aromatic truffle sauce is breathtaking. Next up, perhaps, opt for a fillet of duck with a rich red-berry gravy, or monkfish in a sauce of delicate curry spices and Quercy saffron. Then round off your meal with a dessert of pistachio *sablé* (shortbread) with mixed berries and a blackcurrant marmalade accompanied by a strawberry sorbet. The wines are refined, the bread is baked daily on the premises and all the ingredients have to meet the stringent criteria of a classified Relais & Châteaux hotel in terms of season, locality and environmental respect.

The restaurant accommodates just 40 people, so you'll need to book a table. It is open for dinner every evening, although lunch is served only on Saturdays, Sundays, Mondays and public holidays. Fixed-price lunch menus start at €48 and dinner menus are from €96. If you want to stay the night, the equally indulgent rooms cost from €200.

**Château de la Treyne, 46200 Lacave, tel: (Fr) 5 65 27 60 60, [www.chateaudelatreyne.com](http://www.chateaudelatreyne.com)**

● See next issue for our feature on staying at the Château de la Treyne and exploring the area.



Local resident **Mark Sampson** has some insider tips for dining well in the historical Haut-Quercy area of the Lot *département*

## 2 Le Pont de l'Ouyse

Picture a hot day in summer, eating out on a terrace underneath a spreading sweet chestnut or a venerable lime, just across from the ruins of a bridge and within earshot of the river that swept it away in 1966. You are almost literally underneath the Château de Belcastel, perched on its vertiginous limestone cliff. Here, at Le Pont de l'Ouyse in Lacave, a leisurely time chez the Chambon family is guaranteed.

While their mother oversees the hotel and their father the Bistrot Chambon in Brive-la-Gaillarde, chef Stéphane and maître d' Matthieu are busy in the restaurant, building on their father's reputation for sumptuous local cuisine (which earned Daniel Chambon a Michelin star in 1989). For all Stéphane's early international experience – in London, Bangkok and Dubai, for example – his aim is to introduce outsiders to the best produce in the area and to offer locals a new take on it.

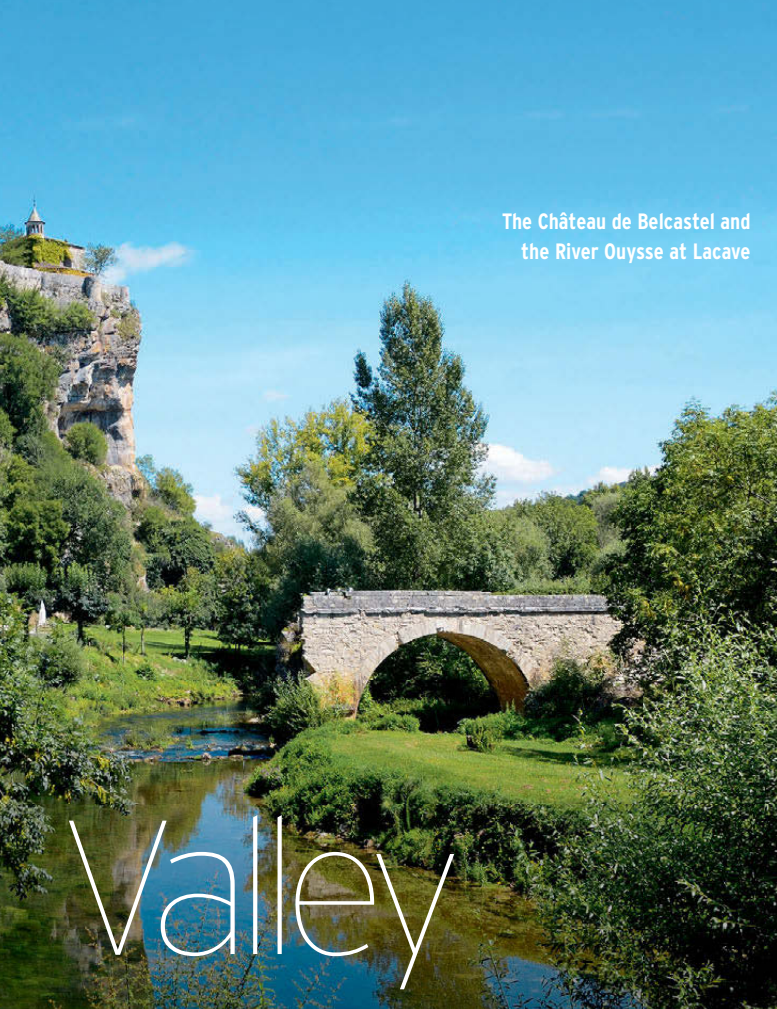
The produce is seriously local. The Rocamadour (melted into a bed of truffle-tinged mascarpone) for my extraordinary cheese course came from Uncle Guy's nearby goat farm. From the Ouyse valley, a brief but beautiful tributary of the River Dordogne, came the *cèpes* for a divine entrée of a terrine with garlic, parsley and a mushroom velouté; the trout fillet (with a crust of ground walnuts on a bed of young leeks) for my *plat*



PHOTOGRAPHS: ARNAUD CHICUREL/HEMIS.FR; DAVID NAKACHE; MARK SAMPSON



The Château de Belcastel and  
the River Ouyse at Lacave



*principal*; and the strawberries that filled a filigree meringue along with a coconut sorbet and a Chantilly cream lifted with Szechuan pepper. You can linger long over these and other components of their gastronomic *Menu Belcastel* with a great Château les Croisille wine from Cahors, then take a post-prandial stroll to the confluence of the Ouyse and the Dordogne before returning for afternoon tea on the sun terrace.

Vegetarians are welcomed and the menu changes with the seasonal fare. Fixed-price lunches (except Sundays) start at €40 and dinners are from €60. The *Menu Belcastel* is €89.

**Le Pont de l'Ouyse, 46200 Lacave,**  
tel: (Fr) 5 65 37 87 04,  
[www.lepontdelouysse.fr](http://www.lepontdelouysse.fr)

#### MUST TRY

Essentially enhanced leftover bread, *la mique (au pain)* was a staple of more humble quercynois cuisine in its agrarian past. It is a testimony to today's higher standards of living that you might now find it as a toasted brioche-like accompaniment to foie gras.

## 3 Les Trois Soleils de Montal

Tucked up in a wooded glade within sight of the Château de Montal, a classified Renaissance jewel on the edge of the market town of Saint-Céré, this unassuming hotel/restaurant is tailored for foodies with a sense of adventure.

A largely self-taught son of a local hotelier, Frédéric Bizat is passionate about his art. The ingredients themselves are primal and he takes consummate care in sourcing the best available – preferably but not exclusively in the locality.

If the reputation of French cuisine rests on its ingredients, it shouldn't rest on its laurels. It has to be open to outside influences. My exquisite entrée was wild turbot with a delicate fennel purée given a slight oriental zing by some Japanese nori (seaweed) and the zest of lemon from the Midi. Preceded by either ravioli of langoustines or lightly fried foie gras marinated with saki and Kyoto miso, it was followed by a succulent grain-fed roast pigeon washed down with a spicy 2009 Madiran selected by the chef's wife, Florence. The cheese board ushered in a chocolate surprise with red fruits and a crème brûlée, or an extraordinary inverted variegated sugar cone concealing local strawberries, cream and sorbet.

A few years ago, the Bizats boldly abolished their à la carte in favour of *formule* menus (described as 'declensions') which change daily. While he is happy to cook for vegetarians, they should phone the day before to warn him. The proof of the pudding, so to speak, lies in the Michelin star and a steady increase in clients.

The set menus cost from €32 to €82. In high season, the restaurant is open all week except for Monday lunch.

**Les Trois Soleils de Montal,**  
**Les Prés-de-Montal,**  
**46400 Saint-Jean**  
**Lespinasse,**  
tel: (Fr) 5 65 10 16 16,  
[www.3soleils.fr](http://www.3soleils.fr) ➔





## APÉRO

### Relais Sainte-Anne

Rue du Pourtalet, 46600 Martel

Tel: (Fr) 5 65 37 40 56

[www.relais-sainte-anne.com](http://www.relais-sainte-anne.com)

This former religious school for girls serves the best aperitifs in town. Licensing laws dictate that they must be a prelude to a meal, so enjoy the full enchanting experience.



# Eating in

6

t

on its cheeses, wines and walnut-based oils and cakes



## WINE

### Cave du Léopard

Place des Consuls  
46600 Martel

Tel: (Fr) 5 65 37 30 27

This small cave in the market square stocks regional and local wines, aperitifs and a small selection of food items such as pâté and foie gras. The shop is open all week from mid-May to mid-September.

## CHOCOLATES

### Chocolaterie Éric Lamy

5 Rue de l'Hôtel de Ville  
19100 Brive-la-Gaillarde

Tel: (Fr) 5 55 18 91 26

[www.chocolaterie-lamy.com](http://www.chocolaterie-lamy.com)

Cakes, macarons, chocolates... all are hand-made in the Lamy atelier and exhibited in the neighbouring shop like works of art. If you want a real chocolate hit, visits and courses are available. [👉](#)

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARK SAMPSON

## MARKET

### Marché de Souillac

Place Doussot and  
Place Saint-Martin

46200 Souillac

Tel: (Fr) 5 65 33 22 00

[www.vallee-dordogne-rocamadour.com](http://www.vallee-dordogne-rocamadour.com)  
This traditional market, near the 12th-century Abbaye Sainte-Marie, is a popular spot every Friday morning. Browse the stalls for all the cheese, charcuterie and vegetables you might need for a feast.

capital of the Causses du Quercy nature park. The owner, Madame Pégourié, is not much younger than her 100-year-old shop, which is full of regional treats such as Cabécou goat's cheese and *gâteau aux noix*.

## BREAD/CAKES

### Jean-Pierre Fonteneau, Boulangerie- Pâtisserie Borie

Place Jet d'Eau  
19500 Meyssac

Tel: (Fr) 5 55 25 40 78

If you are visiting the *Plus Beau Village* of Collonges-la-Rouge, this popular bakery in neighbouring Meyssac offers a range of fine *pâtisseries*. The rustic breads include the best rye loaf in the area.

## CHEESE/ CHARCUTERIE/ COFFEE

### Épicerie Parisienne

Place de la Halle  
46500 Gramat

Tel: (Fr) 5 65 38 71 09

Quintessentially French *épicerie* on the main square in the unofficial



NEXT  
MONTH  
GREAT PLACES  
TO DINE IN  
BORDEAUX

## COFFEE BREAK

### Café Douceur

34 Rue Général de Gaulle  
19120 Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne

Tel: (Fr) 5 55 28 67 05

This café, just into the Corrèze département, lives up to its 'sweet' name. It's open all day most days for everything from tea and home-made biscuits to copious meals made from local ingredients.

**FROM TOP:** Madame Pégourié's traditional *Épicerie Parisienne* in Gramat; The Relais Sainte-Anne in Martel is known for its aperitifs; Customers at the Café Douceur in Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne; **RIGHT:** A chocolate creation at the Borie *pâtisserie* in Meyssac



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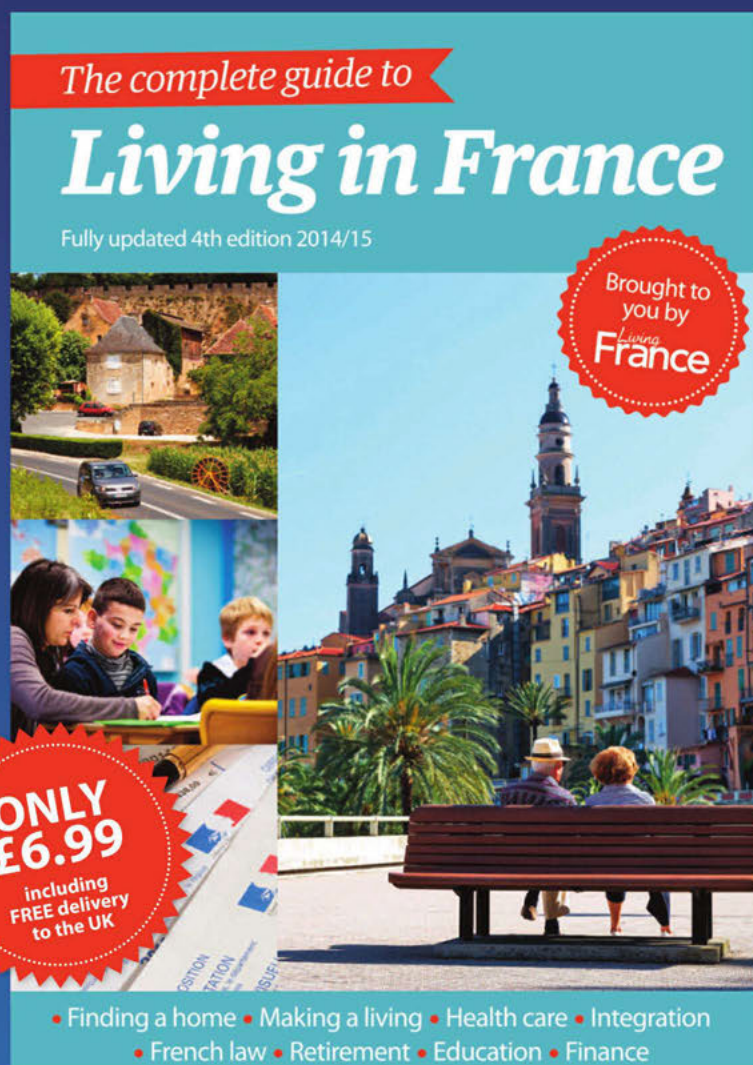
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# Take home... French olive oil

In her regular column, **Clotilde Dusoulier** shows how to cook with the produce we buy in France

**O**live oil plays a major role in the contemporary French kitchen, and indeed the south of the country has a long tradition of olive groves and mills. Tempting as it is to take advantage of a holiday in France to stock up, finding the real thing takes a bit of sleuthing.

All olive oils sold in France must indicate the origin. This can be a clear mention (France, Spain, Tunisia...) or a fuzzy one (*huiles d'olive de la Communauté Européenne* – olive oils from the EU) that gives the manufacturer free rein to assemble batches from different countries.


For French olive oils, seek out a certification of origin (AOP or AOC) that guarantees the region where the olives were grown, their variety and the methods of cultivation, harvest and oil extraction. There are currently eight, displayed prominently on the label: Aix-en-Provence, Les Baux-de-Provence, Haute-Provence, Provence, Nice, Nîmes, Nyons and Corsica. An organic label is also desirable.

Favour freshly harvested oils by checking the expiry date, typically set to two years after bottling. Conversely, the description '*Huile d'olive vierge extra première pression à froid*' (cold-pressed, extra-virgin olive oil) is no indication of quality: almost all olive oils on the French market, good or bad, qualify for this description.



**Clotilde Dusoulier** lives in Paris and writes a popular food blog, *Chocolate & Zucchini*. She has published cookbooks and a guide to Paris restaurants and food shops.

Olives grown in France are harvested from October to February, and the variety of techniques used means that French oils are uniquely varied in their flavour profiles. *Fruité vert* (green) means an early harvest of still-green olives, their oil extracted right away; this makes for a grassy, ardent olive oil, and it is the kind most countries produce because it is cheaper and easier to preserve. For *fruité mûr* (ripe) oils, the olives are allowed to ripen fully, their oil also extracted immediately after harvest; it is milder and sweeter in flavour. *Fruité noir* (black) oils are made from late-harvest olives that are left to sit for a few days more before the oil is extracted; the flavour of the olives is powerful, but well-rounded and with no bitterness.

You'll find such olive oils in supermarkets and fine-food stores; I am especially fond of the *Première Pression Provence* shops that specialise in single-estate oils from French producers; perfect for making savoury biscuits (*see recipe below*). 

## OLIVE OIL AND HERB CANISTRELLI

- 250g plain flour
- 1tsp fine sea salt
- 1½tsp baking powder
- 1tbsp mixed dried herbs, such as *herbes de Provence*
- 80ml extra-virgin olive oil
- 80ml dry white wine

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4 and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a medium bowl, combine the flour, salt, baking powder and herbs. Stir in the oil

- and wine with a fork.
3. Turn out on to a clean work surface and knead gently, without overworking, until the dough comes together into a smooth ball. Add a little more flour

or water as needed.

4. Pat the dough into a disc, about 1.5cm thick. Slice into 2.5cm squares or diamonds. Transfer to the baking sheet, leaving a little space between each.
5. Bake for 15 minutes,

- then lower the heat to 160°C/325°F/gas mark 3 and bake for another 15 minutes, until golden brown.
6. Cool before serving with a pre-dinner glass of wine.

MAKES  
ABOUT  
**50**





# A day in Provence

In the up-and-coming wine region of the Luberon, Dominic Rippon visits the estate that once welcomed Russell Crowe as a big-screen *vigneron*

Until the 1990s, the Luberon was a forgotten region, nestling secretively beneath its eponymous mountains; a landscape scattered with vines, field crops and tumbledown cottages, overlooked by hilltop villages that would be perfectly at home in the sleepiest corners of Tuscany. Then in 1989, Peter Mayle's best-selling novel *A Year in Provence* was published, putting the village of Ménerbes on the map. The initial stream of literary enthusiasts gave way to a larger tide of wealthy urbanites, politicians and international celebrities, who bought up ancient châteaux and farmsteads as peaceful retreats from their busy lives.

While tourism boomed in the Luberon, the area's wine industry struggled. Its vineyards gained *appellation d'origine* status in 1988, but it is only during the past decade, in an initiative spearheaded by a group of local cooperative cellars called Marrenon Vignobles, that the Luberon's wines have begun to gain recognition further afield. The Luberon is quintessentially Provençal, but its *vignerons* look west to the Rhône Valley for their vinous identity. South-east of the sun-baked Côtes du Rhône villages, where the grenache grape thrives in the torrid *garrigue* scrubland, the Luberon enjoys



**Dominic Rippon has many years' experience in the wine trade, both in the UK and France, and now runs the wine merchant business Strictly Wine.**

a more temperate climate than its neighbour: cool air spills down from the Alps through the valleys of the Coulon and Èze rivers, giving milder days and cooler nights. Although the Luberon's crisp, spicy rosés now represent more than half of its production (the fashion for pink is hard to ignore in such a touristic region), this is historically red wine country, where the syrah grape makes wines that have more in common with the northern Rhône *appellations* of Saint-Joseph and Côte-Rôtie than the more southerly Gigondas and Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

I followed the road beneath the village of Ménerbes, glancing toward the hilltop ruins of Château de Lacoste, once home to the infamous Marquis de Sade, as I made my way to nearby Bonnieux. As I entered the driveway of Château la Canorgue, I had the unnerving feeling of having visited it before, as if in a dream. I mentioned my disquiet to owner Nathalie Margan, who quickly explained: this is the château where the 2006 film *A Good Year*, starring Russell Crowe, was filmed. "It's been crazy ever since," Nathalie admitted. "We've found people wandering around and even climbing the walls, trying to take 'selfies'. And they're often not even interested in our wine!"

In Peter Mayle's novel, on which the film is based, the fictional Griffon wine estate is



PHOTOGRAPHS: DOMINIC RIPPON





**LEFT AND TOP:** The vineyards and house of the Château la Canorgue estate; **ABOVE:** Vigneronne Nathalie Margan

believed to produce poor-quality wine until its true potential emerges, but the quality of Château la Canorgue's wines is no such secret. The estate is built on the remains of a Roman villa and its water is still supplied by an ancient subterranean system of wells and channels. When Nathalie's father Jean-Pierre took over the estate in the 1960s, he understood that any chemical treatments to the vineyard risked poisoning the estate's water supply; so he pioneered organic viticulture in the region decades before it became fashionable.

Nathalie uncorked a bottle of the white IGP (*Indication Géographique Protégée*) Viognier, and I was reminded of the Luberon's alluring potential for white winemaking. It showed subtle peach aromas with fresh mineral hints: the result of a long ripening period combined with those cool nights. La Canorgue Rosé was no less zippy, with crunchy red fruit flavours and an explosive mid-palate.

We then returned to white and tried one of Nathalie's happy experiments: a fascinating blend of viognier, marsanne and roussanne grapes, called 'Tout Simplement', fermented using indigenous yeasts and aged in acacia barrels. The result was at once fresh and nutty, with a honeyed caramel nose and a warm, savoury palate. As we tried Château la Canorgue Rouge, with its complex red fruit, liquorice and warm spice flavours, my eyes were drawn to an empty space in the wine rack, with a label that read 'Coin Perdu' (literally 'hidden corner'). Recognising the name from *A Good Year*, I wondered if I could taste the wine that bore the name of the Griffon estate's secret blend. "Alas," Nathalie declared, "we're completely out of stock." 🍷

## THE WINEMAKER RECOMMENDS

Château la Canorgue vigneronne Nathalie Margan reveals her favourite places to stay and dine in the area

### WHERE TO STAY Hôtel La Bastide de Capelongue

Les Claparèdes  
Chemin des Cabanes  
84480 Bonnieux  
Tel: (Fr) 4 90 75 89 78  
www.capelongue.com  
Luxurious hotel with exquisite rooms and a two-Michelin-star restaurant. Doubles from €140.

### Le Clos du Buis

Rue Victor Hugo  
84480 Bonnieux  
Tel: (Fr) 4 90 75 88 48  
www.leclosdubuis.fr  
A cosy, chic hotel with panoramic views. Doubles from €98.

### WHERE TO EAT Restaurant L'Arôme

2 Rue Lucien Blanc  
84480 Bonnieux  
Tel: (Fr) 4 90 75 88 62  
www.larome-restaurant.com  
Chef Jean-Michel Pagès gives Mediterranean cuisine an oriental twist in his vaulted medieval dining room. Menus from €29.

### Restaurant Le Fournil

Place Carnot  
84480 Bonnieux  
Tel: (Fr) 4 90 75 83 62  
www.lefournil-bonnieux.com  
This restaurant is set in

a troglodytic cave in the centre of the village and has a large, shady terrace. Menus from €24.90.

### WHERE TO VISIT Lacoste

Pretty village dominated by Marquis de Sade's château, now being renovated by fashion designer Pierre Cardin. www.lacoste-84.com

### L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue

Riverside village famous for its Sunday morning market. It also makes a great base for a lazy afternoon's kayaking. www.oti-delasorgue.fr



**GETTING THERE:** The 6hr direct rail service from London to Avignon TGV can be booked through Voyages.sncf.com (tel: 0844 848 5848, www.voyages-sncf.com) with returns from €109; Bonnieux is a 9hr

drive from the northern ferry ports; The nearest airports are Marseille and Nîmes;

**TOURIST INFORMATION:** Vaucluse tourist board, tel: (Fr) 4 90 80 47 00, www.provenceguide.com; **WINES:** Les Vins Luberon, Boulevard du Rayol, 84160 Lourmarin, tel: (Fr) 4 90 07 34 40, www.vins-luberon.fr.

## TOURING THE VINEYARDS

### Château la Canorgue

Route du Pont Julien  
84480 Bonnieux  
Tel: (Fr) 4 90 75 81 01  
www.chateau-lacanorgue.com

**Choice wine:** Château la Canorgue Luberon Rouge.  
**Taste:** Syrah, grenache and carignan grapes give a liquorice-scented wine with ripe tannins.

**Drink with:** Rack of lamb.  
**Price at the estate:** €9.80.

Also visit:  
**Domaine de la Citadelle**

84560 Ménerbes  
Tel: (Fr) 4 90 72 41 58  
www.domaine-citadelle.com

**Choice wine:** Gouverneur Saint-Auban Blanc IGP.

**Taste:** A spicy, exotic, ageworthy blend of mostly viognier and roussanne grapes.

### Château la Verrerie

1810 Route du Luberon  
84360 Puget-sur-Durance  
Tel: (Fr) 4 90 08 97 97  
www.chateau-la-verrierie.com

**Choice wine:** Grand Deffand Luberon Rouge.  
**Taste:** A tight, grainy, perfumed wine that needs time to develop: one of the world's best syrahs.

### Marrenon Vignobles

Boulevard Saint-Roch  
84240 La Tour-d'Aigues  
Tel: (Fr) 4 90 07 27 47  
www.marrenon.fr  
**Choice wine:** Versant Sud Luberon Rouge.  
**Taste:** This spicy, blackberry scented red is a dead-ringer for Côtes du Rhône Villages.



# LA CULTURE

*Your essential guide to French  
culture and language*

## A SIMPLE MAN

Cannes 2015 award-winner **VINCENT LINDON** tells **Richard Mowe** why he enjoys playing the underdog in his films

As he matures, Vincent Lindon, who was named Best Actor at the Cannes Film Festival this year, has found his niche playing characters on the edge while also having a real-life commitment to social causes.

Lindon's father was a wealthy industrialist, so he may not seem the most obvious candidate to portray characters in hard-hitting social dramas, the latest of which is the award-winning role as a jobless tradesman in Stéphane Brizé's *La loi du marché* (*The Measure of a Man*).

Not that he displays any ostentatious wealth. There is a Parisian apartment, but there is no château and no pad on the Côte d'Azur, where we met just before he received his award. Rather than travelling in a smoked-glass limousine he rides around Paris on a motorbike.

The actor seems to have been around in French cinema for decades, with features that always appeared 'lived in' and a slight facial twitch that miraculously disappears whenever he is in front of the cameras.

He was drawn into the profession almost accidentally, working first as an assistant costume designer on Alain Resnais's *Mon oncle d'Amérique* (1980). He spent a few years in the United States and then worked as a newspaper journalist. Finally he decided to take a stab at acting and enlisted in the Cours Florent school in Paris, where a teacher put him forward for a role in the thriller *Le Faucon* in 1983.



**ABOVE:** Vincent Lindon in *La loi du marché*  
**RIGHT:** At Cannes in May with his Best Actor award for the film

He worked his way through the 1980s in secondary roles, collaborating with Bertrand Blier in *Notre histoire*, with Jean-Jacques Beineix in *Betty Blue* and with Claude Sautet in *Quelques jours avec moi*. However, it wasn't until he teamed up with Claude Lelouch for two films, *La belle histoire* (1992) and the comedy hit *Tout ça... pour ça* in 1993 that his career began to take off.

In the past couple of decades he has become one of the most sought-after names in French cinema and earned a César nomination for his role in Philippe Lioret's *Welcome* (2009), as a swimming instructor helping refugees in Calais. Besides smaller-scale dramas, Lindon is not adverse to a high-concept thriller such as Fred Cavayé's *Mea Culpa*, opposite Gilles Lellouche.

It is his work with Brizé which has brought him his most recent recognition

and accolades, starting with *Mademoiselle Chambon*, in which he played a small-town artisan falling in love with his son's teacher, continuing through the rigours of *Quelques heures du printemps* (*A Few Hours of Spring*) as an inarticulate lorry driver living with his mother, and now *La loi du marché* as a mechanic on the dole with a wife and a disabled son.

Lindon is full of praise for his collaborator. "What I like about his films is that you are not told what to think. He shows things the way they are and you have to make up your own mind. Films used to be all about escapism, but more and more people want to see films about the world they live in – the kind of films made by Ken Loach or the [Belgian] Dardenne Brothers. It is almost as if you have to go to the cinema to get a glimpse of reality because when you see the news on television it is too concentrated to take in."

Although he is viewed as an actor committed to causes he insists: "I am not a hero, I just make movies. When you have a certain level of fame in France you get offered a lot of scripts in the same vein. In my generation there are three or four actors who read everything – Vincent Cassel is another in the same bracket. I pick and choose – I don't have a luxurious lifestyle to sustain – I lead a simple life."

Lindon suggests that his way of demonstrating against injustices is through his films, and a glance at his film CV suggests a social conscience ➤➤➤





at work. “When I did *Welcome* about illegal immigrants, an amendment to the law was passed shortly afterwards and after *A Few Hours of Spring* the law was changed to ensure a dignified death. There you have two films and two laws – that is my way of protesting.”

To ease under the skin of his character Thierry in *La loi du marché*, the director allowed him and the rest of the cast the time to breathe in the situations and predicaments. “Thierry is courageous because he shows great restraint when he has to suffer the indignities thrust upon him. He demonstrates he cares about his family by actions rather than words. I am a great observer and often I will use that material as part of a character.”

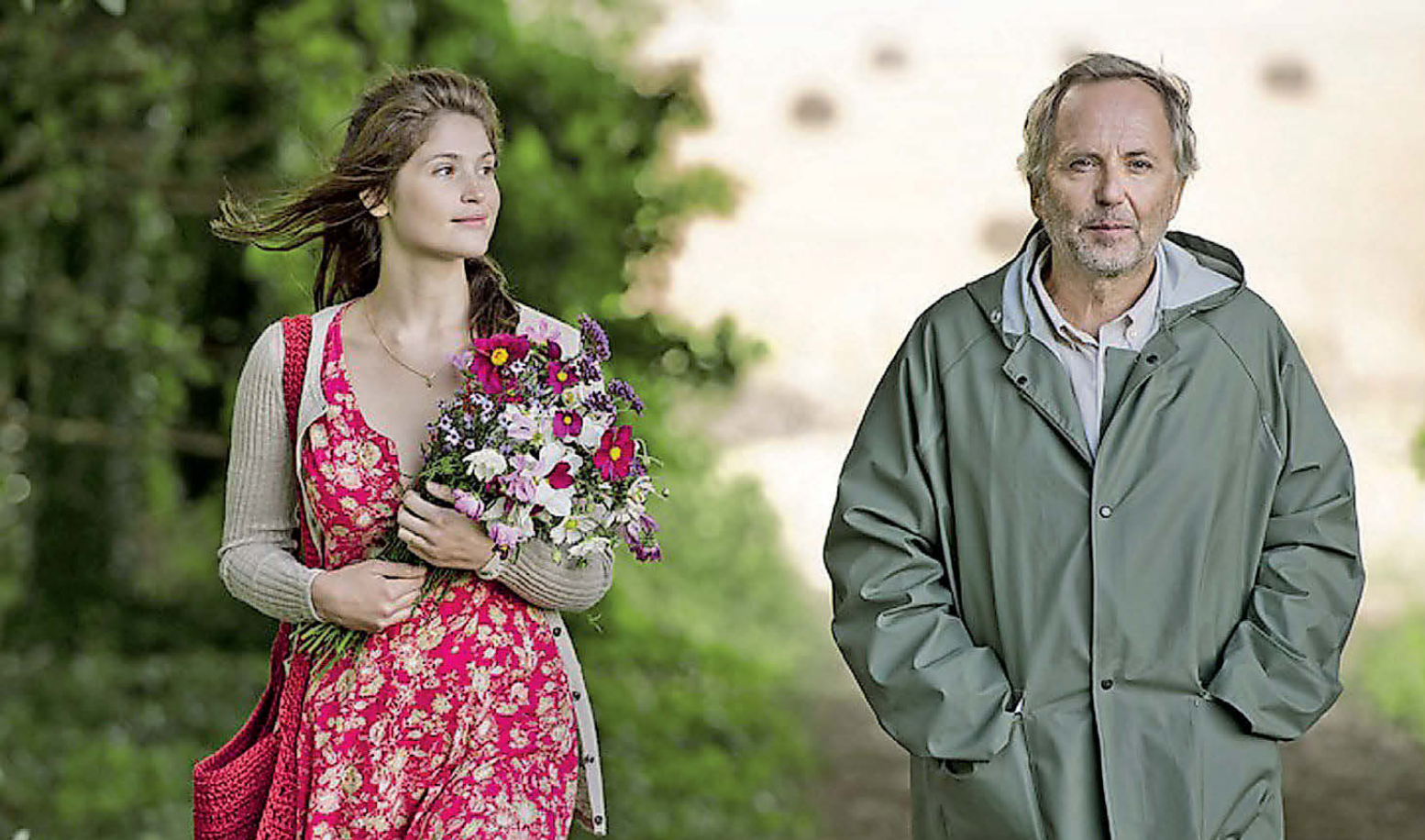
Lindon is no great fan of social media and prefers to sit around the dinner table with friends and thrash out issues of the day. “I love that, even if we do not agree – in fact it is better when we don’t.”

Despite his spell in the US in his youth he harbours no Hollywood dreams. “What would I do there for eight months – play a bad guy with gold teeth and an awful French accent. By the time I came back to France they would have forgotten who I am.”

With his best actor trophy proudly tucked away he will choose his next role carefully. “I have read a few scripts but what I need is the desire – and you cannot buy or prepare for that. It will just hit you. There was one film that I desperately wanted to do for a long time – but then ten days ago it all folded. I simply wait for roles to come along and if they appeal to me, then great. I do not say I want to do a comedy or a thriller or a psychological movie, I just want to do a good script and one that I like.

“I care only about doing good work and the only opinion I listen to is my own. The beginning of the downfall of an artist is when he starts to listen to everyone else rather than himself.” 🎬





CINEMA RELEASE

# Gemma Boverly

**STARRING:** Gemma Arterton, Fabrice Luchini, Jason Flemyng

**DIRECTOR:** Anne Fontaine

**CERTIFICATE:** 15

**RUNNING TIME:** 99 minutes

**RELEASE DATE:** 7 August



**T**he work of graphic novel writer and illustrator Posy Simmonds seems to be a good fit for Gemma Arterton. After a memorable performance in the adaptation of *Tamara Drewe* five years ago, the actress is equally alluring in *Gemma Boverly*, an intriguing take on Simmonds's tale of love, lust and loaves of bread.

The story – inspired by Gustave Flaubert's 1856 novel *Madame Bovary* – is set in a Normandy village where the baker Martin Joubert (Luchini) is left spellbound by the arrival of Charlie (Flemyng) and Gemma Boverly (Arterton, pictured with Luchini), a couple relocating from London. Joubert, who adores Flaubert's work, sees Gemma's last name as an indication that she is doomed to repeat the mistakes of tragic literary character Emma Bovary. His fears are heightened when a bored Gemma starts an affair with dashing young aristocrat Hervé (Niels Schneider).

A clever post-modern take on a French classic, *Gemma Boverly* will delight fans of Flaubert, who will pick up references to his most famous novel throughout. Fans of Simmonds will be happy too, with French director Anne Fontaine's film successfully capturing the look and feel of the popular graphic novel.

Sun-kissed and sultry, Arterton is perfect as an object of desire, even making something as mundane as kneading dough sexy. However, the star's efforts cannot completely hide the fact that the film lacks emotional depth. Like something you might find in Joubert's bakery, *Gemma Boverly* is light and enjoyable but makes you crave something more substantial.

**Pierre de Villiers**

● See page 106 for an interview with Posy Simmonds.

## OTHER CINEMA AND DVD RELEASES

### CINEMA

**3 Hearts** (from 14 August) – When two strangers (played by Benoît Poelvoorde and Charlotte Gainsbourg) develop a strong connection over the course of a night in provincial

France it has far-reaching consequences for their loved ones in Benoît Jacquot's romantic melodrama.

**Zarafa** (from July, date TBC) – French animated film about an African boy who escapes from slavery and becomes friends with an orphaned giraffe which is being sent as a gift from the Pasha of Egypt to the King of France, Charles X.



## Five minutes with... ANDREW ROBERTS

The British historian and biographer talks about his research for *Napoleon the Great* (see review, right), and his lifelong love of France.

I have been fascinated with Napoléon since my mother presented me with a biography when I was ten years old. After university I became a writer and wrote a couple of books about Winston Churchill before coming up with the idea of a book on Wellington and Napoléon. I then wanted to undertake something huge, the result of which is this mammoth book, which took me longer to write than the time that Napoléon spent on Saint Helena and Elba combined.

It took me six years to research; I had to master 33,000 letters published by the Fondation Napoléon in Paris and I visited 53 of his battlefields, which was hugely enjoyable. I decided that it would be best to look at him chronologically, so I began by visiting Brienne in Champagne, where he went to school, followed by the École Militaire in Paris, where he attended university. I also went along the Route Napoléon, stopping in all the places that he visited, from Cannes to Lyon.

I spent almost five months travelling through France. I wrote much of the



book at my aunt's farmhouse in the Dordogne, a place free from distraction. France has always been a central aspect of my life; when I was a child I travelled to the south of France with my parents on holiday and Paris is possibly my all-time favourite place.

Unlike other British historians, I have never been anti-Napoléon; while some see him as a racist, a sexist and a conqueror who ended the French Revolution, I lean towards the idea shared by the politician Dominique de Villepin, in that he is a remarkable man of whom the French should be very proud.

**Andrew Roberts was talking to Peter Stewart**

We are listening to...

**En Pensée** by French artist Christina Goh. The lyrics (on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) deal with moving on in life from a failed relationship.

### DVD

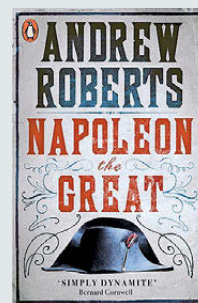
**Suite Française** (from 27 July) - A wartime love affair between a French villager (Michelle Williams) and a German soldier (Matthias Schoenaerts) causes consternation in the small town of Bussy in this adaptation of Irène Némirovsky's novel.

## BOOKS

### NAPOLEON THE GREAT

Andrew Roberts,  
Penguin, £12.99

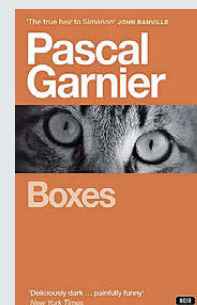
The bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo gives historian Andrew Roberts's gripping and sympathetic biography of Napoléon Bonaparte an added interest. This meticulously researched and fast-paced work portrays an emperor of exceptional dynamism and intellect, a man with a personality that was revered even by his enemies. This 900-page work also seeks to overturn numerous received opinions, including the myth surrounding Napoléon's great romance with Joséphine. Full of rich anecdotes and immensely readable, Roberts successfully conveys why one of history's most fascinating figures remains so influential. ★★★★★



### BOXES

Pascal Garnier,  
Gallic Books, £7.99

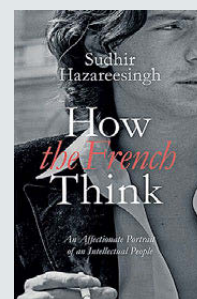
Brice and Emma buy a home in the idyllic French countryside, but then Emma vanishes suddenly. Brice keeps himself busy in the house, confident that she will soon return, and gradually gets to know his neighbours. He meets an enigmatic woman in white named Blanche, to whose late father Brice bears an uncanny resemblance. Filled with sudden violence and told with disconcerting matter-of-factness, this is a deliciously dark and surreal piece of *noir* fiction from the master of black humour, Pascal Garnier, whose work is increasingly likened to that of Georges Simenon and film-maker Quentin Tarantino. ★★★★★



### HOW THE FRENCH THINK

Sudhir Hazareesingh,  
Allen Lane, £20

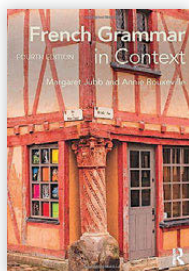
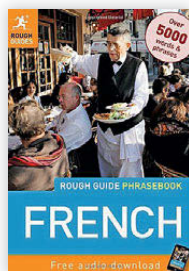
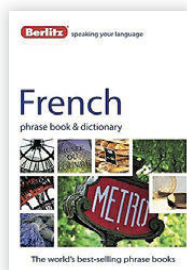
France's position in the world and its way of life are just two of the ideas discussed in this lively account of the country's intellectual tradition and the way it has shaped its identity. Drawing on the ideas espoused by such influential thinkers as Voltaire and Descartes, the author - an Oxford academic - demonstrates just how imaginative and far-reaching French thought has been over the past 400 years. Nicolas Sarkozy's presidential style and the symbolic importance of Astérix are among the wide range of topics covered as ideals such as citizenship, social justice and the people's belief in the State come under the microscope. ★★★★★





# LEARNING MADE FUN

Improve your French with Peter Stewart's round-up of accessible language resources



I was strolling past my local bookshop the other day when something caught my eye; I was struck by how much more colourful and user-friendly language phrasebooks have become in the past couple of years.

The *Berlitz French Phrasebook & Dictionary* (Berlitz Language, £4.99) is an excellent example. The new, updated version comes with a more appealing colour-coding system, allowing readers to retrieve the **phrases** that they require in less time, while the simplified phonetics makes it easier to pronounce the words correctly.

Another impressive language resource is the *Rough Guide French Phrasebook* (Rough Guides, £5.99), which contains more than **5,000 words** to help your French holiday go smoothly, such as booking a hotel room, enquiring about train times and ordering meals through its menu list reader. What I found particularly useful were the free audio downloads recorded by native speakers which

allow learners to gain a feel for the language, wherever they are.

Learning French **grammar** is hard going for many people, but a book that caught my eye at the bookshop is *French Grammar in Context* (Routledge, £21.99). The authors take an innovative approach to the topic, drawing on literary texts from great French writers such as Albert Camus, Jacques Prévert and Raymond Queneau to illustrate key grammar points. Journalistic sources including magazines and regional newspapers are also used. The book contains written and spoken exercises, and you can access further work on its companion website.

For an enjoyable French **summer read**, seek out a copy of *Et si c'était vrai...* (Pocket, £8.60) by Marc Levy. The writing is deceptively simple, but the story is full of unexpected twists and turns, and contains so much evocative language that it will reward learners wishing to put their level of French to the test.

## THIS MONTH'S BEST PICKS

### BEGINNERS

**French Grammar You Really Need to Know, Teach Yourself, £10.99**

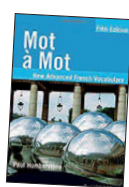
This beginners' guide provides clear explanations of the essential grammar structures in French. The book has ample practice exercises to ensure learners become as confident as possible with the language, gaining the intuition needed to converse in French.



### INTERMEDIATE

**Mot à Mot: New Advanced French Vocabulary, Hodder Education, £7.99**

This excellent resource will help intermediate to advanced learners improve their essay-writing skills with vocabulary sections on topics ranging from world politics to the environment and healthcare. Phrases are drawn from real sources such as magazines and websites.



### ADVANCED

**Madame Bovary, Gallimard, £6.50**

Gustave Flaubert's groundbreaking novel about a bored housewife's scandalous affair in 19th-century France is a good test for those aiming for complete fluency. The book's elongated paragraphs, long descriptions and dramatic language will definitely put advanced learners' French skills to the test.



Do say,  
**DON'T SAY:**

If you are having dinner with French friends and you want to explain that you are full after the meal, be sure to say '*J'ai assez mangé*'. If you use the word '*plein*' for 'full' and say '*Je suis plein(e)*', you are telling them you are drunk.

## GRAMMAR CORNER

### ALLER

The verb '*aller*' means 'to go' and is used in French almost in the same way as it is in English. Examples include '*Je vais à la banque*', which means 'I'm going to the bank', and '*Nous allons au cinéma*', which translates as 'We're going to the cinema'.

The verb is commonly used to convey the idea that something is about to happen in the near future. Examples include '*Nous allons partir dans dix minutes*', which means 'We are going to leave in ten minutes', and '*Vas-tu m'aider?*', which translates as 'Are you going to help me?'.

'*Aller*' also appears in various idiomatic expressions; notable examples are '*Je vais à pied*', which means 'I'm going on foot'; '*On y va?*', which translates as 'Shall we go?'; and '*Ça va sans dire*', for 'That goes without saying'.



# LOVE WITHOUT LOCKS

The padlocks left by couples on the Pont des Arts in Paris have gone, but romance lives on, says **Audrey Pariès**

**A**u revoir les cadenas de l'amour, bonjour le street art. Le 1er Juin, les amoureux inconditionnels du Pont des Arts ont vu les employés de la Mairie de Paris retirer les grilles rattachées aux parapets du pont et qui arboraient des milliers de cadenas. Cette passerelle piétonnière, le plus ancien pont métallique de Paris, date du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Elle a été reconstruite au début des années 1980 et rallie l'Institut Français au Louvre, en enjambant la Seine. Or aujourd'hui, les autorités sont forcées de constater que ce trait d'union ne supporte plus le poids de tout cet amour.

Depuis 2008, attacher un cadenas sur les parapets du pont était devenu coutume pour les couples, français ou étrangers, de passage dans la capitale du romantisme, souhaitant sceller leur amour. Sur le cadenas étaient inscrits les noms des deux amoureux ainsi qu'une date et parfois une citation. Cette pratique venue d'Europe de l'Est avait fait du Pont des Arts une véritable attraction touristique.

Malheureusement, les 45 tonnes de cadenas commençaient à détériorer le Monument historique. La Mairie a donc pris la décision de les remplacer par quatre fresques de 150 mètres de long réalisées par des artistes internationaux de street art: Jace, El Seed, Brusk et Pantonio. Le jeune réunionnais Jace, connu pour ses petits 'gouzous', a choisi de représenter une vision naïve et décalée de la vie parisienne telle que se l'imaginer le touriste lambda. Tous les artistes se sont inspirés du lieu, du symbole romantique et artistique qu'il représente afin que le nom 'Pont des Arts' prenne tout son sens. Cette exposition temporaire demeurera sur le pont jusqu'au début de l'automne. Des panneaux vitrés remplaceront ensuite plus durablement les œuvres.

Le romantisme n'a, cependant, pas complètement disparu sur la passerelle piétonne. Un mouvement intitulé 'Love without locks' est apparu. De quoi s'agit-il? Cela consiste tout simplement à prendre un selfie sur le pont et à partager la photo sur les réseaux sociaux avec le hashtag #LoveWithoutLocks. Une nouvelle manière pour les couples de marquer leur passage dans la ville Lumière.

**G**oodbye love locks, hello street art. On 1 June, the wholehearted lovers of the Pont des Arts saw staff from Paris City Hall remove the fences attached to the bridge parapets that had displayed thousands of padlocks. This footbridge, the oldest metal bridge in Paris, dates from the 19th century. It was rebuilt in the early 1980s and spans the River Seine, connecting the Institut Français to the Louvre. But now, the authorities were compelled to note that the bridge could no longer stand the weight of all this love.

Since 2008, attaching a padlock on the bridge parapets had become customary for couples, French or foreign, who were visiting the capital of romance and wanted to seal their love. On the padlock were written the names of the two lovers, a date and sometimes a quote. This practice, which originated in Eastern Europe, transformed the Pont des Arts into a tourist attraction.

Unfortunately, the 45 tons of padlocks were beginning to damage the historic monument. The City Hall therefore decided to replace them with four

150-metre frescoes created by international street artists: Jace, El Seed, Brusk and Pantonio. The young Réunion islander Jace, known for his little 'gouzou' characters, chose to represent a naive and offbeat vision of Parisian life as imagined by the average tourist. All the artists were inspired by the setting, and its romantic and artistic symbolism, in order for it to become the 'Pont des Arts' in every sense of the word. The temporary exhibition will remain on the bridge until early autumn. Glass panels will then replace the frescoes.

Romance, however, has not completely disappeared on the pedestrian bridge. A movement entitled 'Love without locks' appeared. What is it? This simply involves taking a selfie on the bridge and sharing the picture on social networks with the hashtag #LoveWithoutLocks. A new way for lovebirds to mark their visit to the City of Light. 📸



Word on the street:

The word '**daube**' normally refers to a beef stew cooked in wine, but the phrase '*c'est de la daube*!' is a slang way of saying that something is useless.

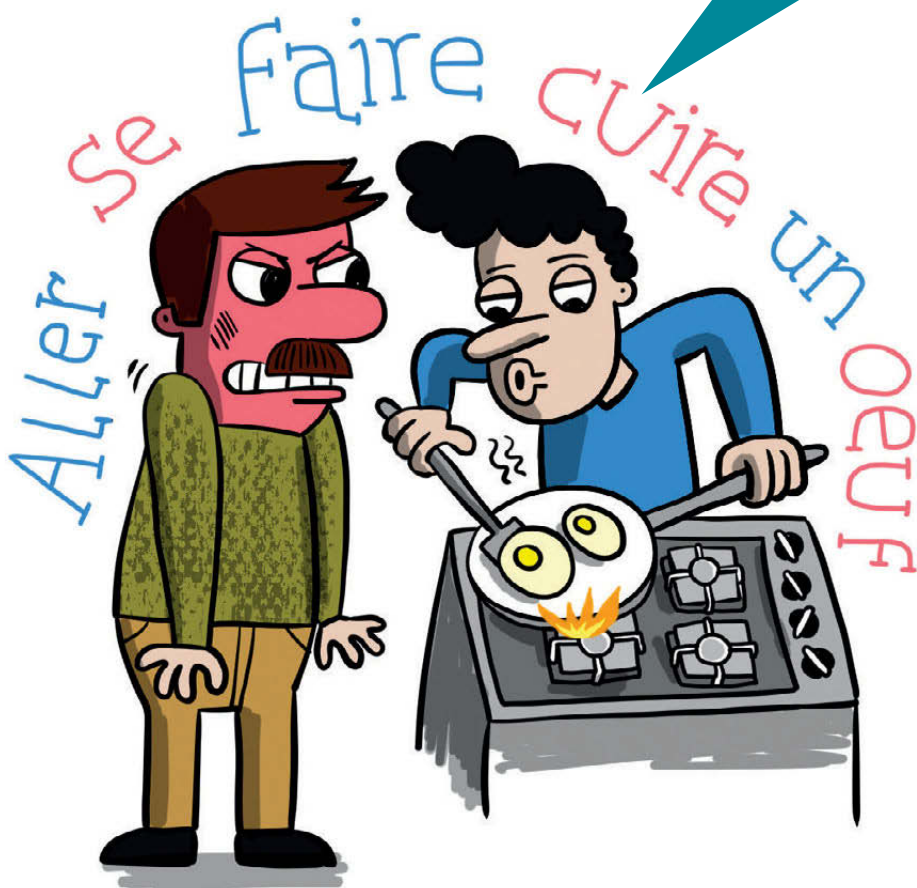




# IDIOMS

Guess the meaning of the idiom  
'aller se faire cuire un oeuf'.

- a) To tell someone to get lost
- b) To have egg on one's face
- c) To blow a gasket



## QUI SUIS-JE?

Lisez les indices ci-dessous  
et devinez qui je suis

**Je suis né à Narbonne  
en 1913.**

J'ai composé presque 1.000  
chansons, dont l'une des plus  
connues s'intitule *La Mer*.

**En 1981, je suis revenu à la  
chanson avec un album dédié  
à l'enfance.**

Je suis...

5 WAYS  
TO SAY...

*I don't  
mind*

**Ça m'est égal**

*This is the standard  
phrase to mean  
'I don't mind'.*

**Ça va**

*This commonly used  
phrase translates as  
'It's OK'.*

**Ça ne me  
gêne pas**

*This phrase means 'It  
doesn't worry me'.*

**Ça ne me  
dérange pas**

*This phrase translates  
as 'It doesn't upset me'.*

**Ça ne me fait ni  
chaud ni froid**

*This phrase translates  
as 'It makes me neither  
hot nor cold' and  
implies that you are  
indifferent about  
something.*

## WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

Match these cooking methods  
with their English equivalents

Farci

Smoked

À la  
vapeur

Wrapped  
in pastry

Haché

Stuffed

Confit

Minced

En crouste

Steamed

Fumé

Cooked in fat



How to say...

Huître  
[wee-truh]  
OysterFun French  
**ANAGRAMS**

Find the French garden equipment words

- 1 Sednoute
- 2 Oirtpédal
- 3 Nàzgoaliaba
- 4 Tuerotéb
- 5 Risoaror
- 6 Lesliacci

**Answers**

the fisherman from fishing.  
peach tree, and the peach tree no longer hinders  
the fisherman from fishing, the fisherman felled the  
beneath a peach tree, the peach tree hinders the  
nempêche plus le pêcheur. A fisherman fishes  
de pêcheur. Le pêcheur coupe le pêcheur. Le pêcheur  
sous un pêcheur, le pêcheur empêche le pêcheur  
shears. **Tongue-twister:** Un pêcheur pêcheait  
wheebarrow, arrosoir - watering can, cisailles  
- trowel, balai à gazon - lawn rake, broquette -  
Anagrams: Tondeuse - lawnmower, déplantoir  
fumé - smoked. **Qui suis-je?** Charles Trenet.  
steamed, haché - minced, confit - cooked in fat.  
the menu? **Idiom:** A To tell someone to get lost.  
the menu? **Idiom:** A To tell someone to get lost.

A	J	N	B	R	
A	C	H	E	V	E
Q	U	A	R	T	R
S	U	R	N	A	T
E	L	C	E	S	A
G	R	E	C	T	E
E	O	S	E	R	I
D	U	R	C	I	A
R	E	U	S	S	I

**Mots Fléchés winner**

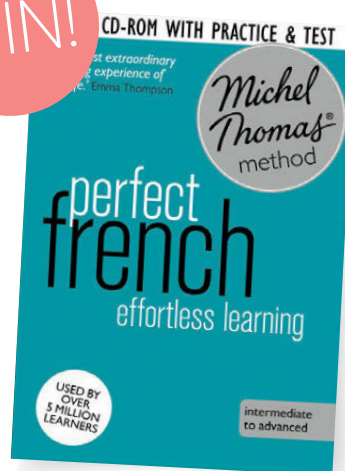
The winner of the June Mots Fléchés quiz (solution above) is Ms F. Wood, from Prenton on Merseyside. The mystery town was Mirande.

COMPETITION  
**Les Mots Fléchés**

The winner of this month's competition will receive the *Michel Thomas Perfect French* CD-audio course, published by Hodder & Stoughton. It will help intermediates take their French to the next level and gain confidence

without books, writing or striving to memorise everything. The pack, which retails at £100, contains ten hours of audio learning on CD, more than three hours of extra vocabulary help, a visual learning review and interactive exercises.

WIN!



2ÈME VILLE DE FRANCE ILE PORTUGAISE		MALAXERAIS SAVANT		TROUÉE		AFRICAIN DU NORD		MÉTAL JAUNE ORGANE FILTRANT		SAISON
						MARCHE SANS BUT				
BRUIT DE BOUCHE VOLEUR				TRÈS PEU RÉPANDU DÉBAUCHES	R	A	R	E	NERVOSITÉ	
						PETIT BAISER				
EXTENSION PURE										ANIMAL PARESSEUX
						MONNAIE ASIATIQUE		PETIT RUISSEAU LETTRE GRECQUE		U
FIÈRE		POSSÈDE DEUXIÈME PERSONNE		PAYS ARABE AU LARGE DE LA ROCHELLE						N
							ABIMA			A
OBTINSENT								APPRIIS		U

To enter: Complete Les Mots Fléchés grid and note all the letters in the grey squares. Rearrange these letters to spell a French town or city and send this answer, together with your name, telephone number and address, to: **FRANCE Magazine, Les Mots Fléchés, Cumberland House, Oriol Road, Cheltenham, GL50 1BB. Entries close 5 August, 2015.**

Last month's Les Mots Fléchés answers will be posted on our website [www.francemag.com/quiz](http://www.francemag.com/quiz) and appear in the September issue, on sale on 5 August, 2015. The answers to this month's competition will be on the website from 12 August, 2015 and in the October issue on sale on 2 September, 2015.

**TONGUE-TWISTER** Slice up the baguette where the spaces should be

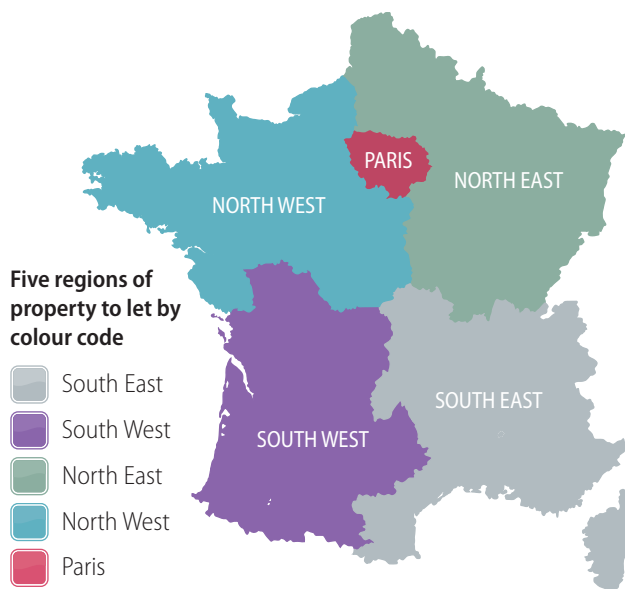
Unpêcheurpêchaitsousunpêcherlepêcherempêchait  
lepêcheurdepêcherlepêcheurcoupalepêcher  
lepêchernempêchapluslepêcheur



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### KEY

- 1 Full colour picture
- 2 Département number
- 3 Nearest town
- 4 Département name
- 5 Sleeping capacity
- 6 Property description
- 7 Weekly rental range (in £ or €)
- 8 Contact details

Numbers 9 - 16 are distances in km, O/S for On-site and N/P for details Not Provided.

- 9 Nearest supermarket
- 10 Nearest airport
- 11 Nearest beach/swimming
- 12 Nearest tennis
- 13 Nearest golf
- 14 Nearest horseriding
- 15 Nearest restaurant
- 16 Nearest tourist attraction

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FEATURED  
RENTAL

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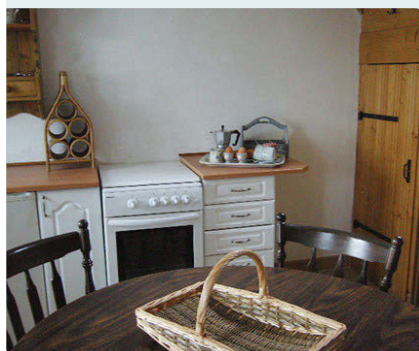
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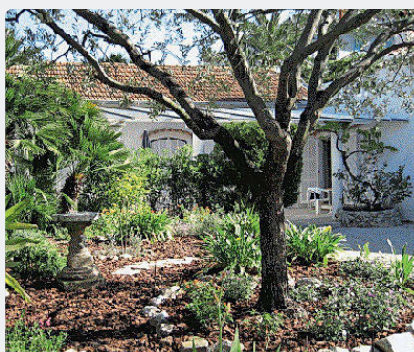
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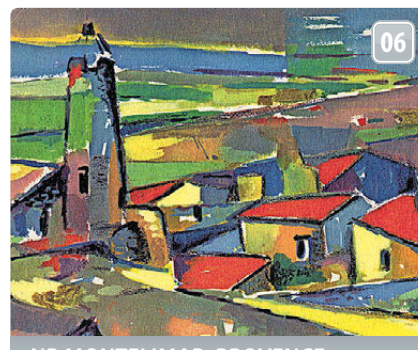
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06

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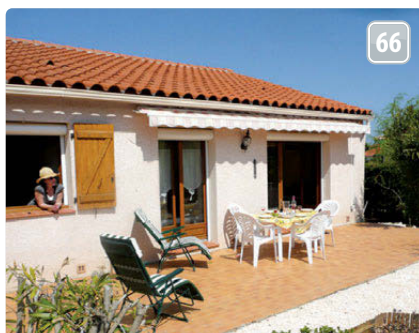
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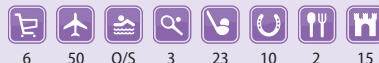
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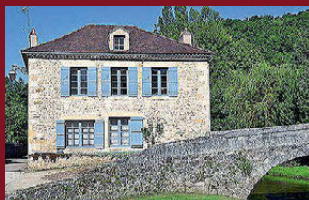


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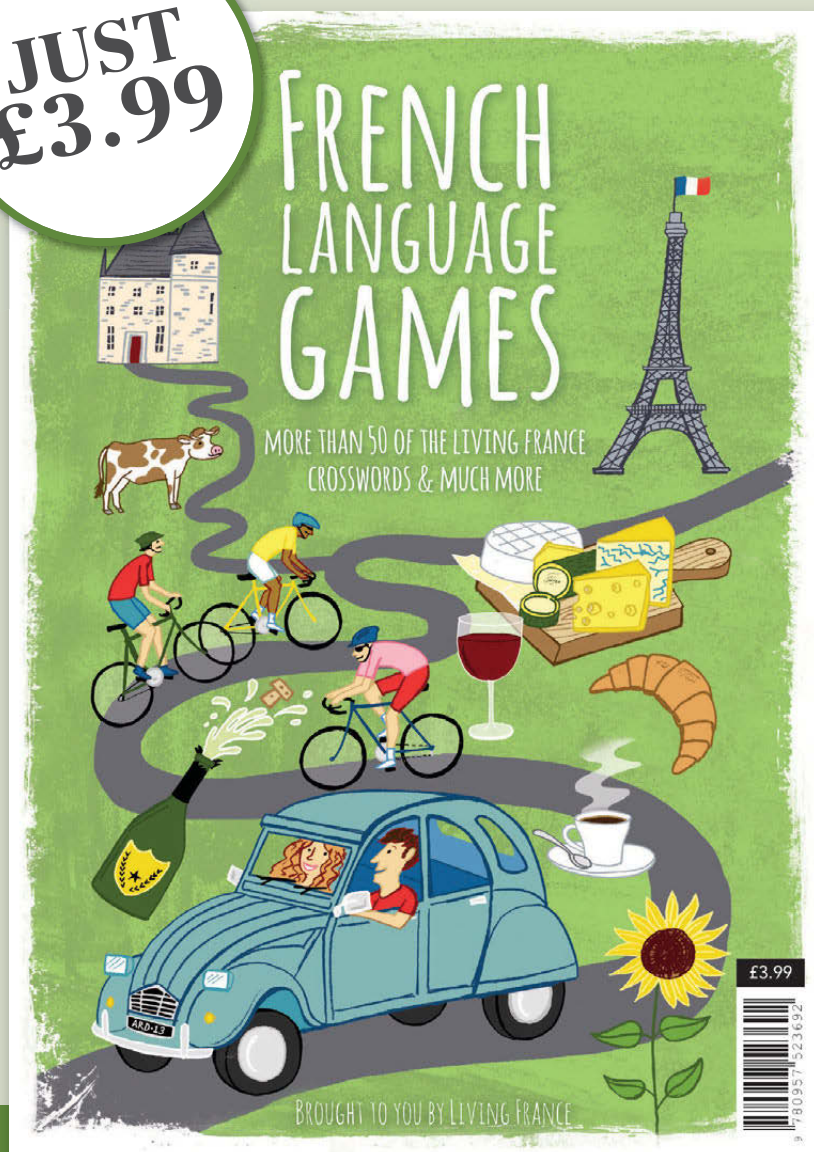
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## INTERVIEW

**What's it like to see the world you created in the graphic novel *Gemma Boverly* up on the big screen?**

I saw the film last year in France and it looked very much like my drawings; the French countryside and what people wore, it's extraordinary how it was done. I think Gemma Arterton is amazingly beautiful and she makes a very fruity Gemma, while Fabrice Luchini is a force all of his own as the baker.

**Your work satirises those who live in the French countryside but don't bother to learn the language. Have you witnessed this first-hand?**

I have been in parts of France popular with English people, so I've heard them yelling in English. Not all of them necessarily yell in the street, but I have met people who say: "I don't really talk French except to the builders and then they still didn't understand about the tiles." I think to myself, well b....y well learn French!

**How often do you travel through France?**

I've just spent a few weeks in France visiting friends in Gaillac, near Albi, and I also know Brittany quite well. I get to Paris quite a lot; it's an inspirational place. I find it interesting how the smell in Paris has changed. It used to smell of Gauloises, but doesn't anymore.

**Which is your favourite part of Paris?**

I'm addicted to shoe shops and there's a particular one I like in Rue du Cherche-Midi, which is near the Bon Marché department store (pictured). I sometimes have a sandwich outside and look at the shoes in Cherche-Midi.



# My France Posy Simmonds

The British graphic novelist tells **Pierre de Villiers** about her student days in Paris and French people's undying love for *bandes dessinées*

I love watching people and Paris is particularly brilliant for that because you can sit outside restaurants.

**You studied at the Sorbonne in Paris. Was that enjoyable?**

Oh, I have very happy memories of that time. It was a big transition from being in the English countryside at

a girls' boarding school to suddenly being in Paris, more or less on my own. I had never been in a city before because I grew up in the country, so it was completely wonderful. I walked everywhere and I transformed myself from wearing a respectable tweed overcoat and black patent handbag

and shoes to wearing a black leather skirt, black stockings and a black polo neck when I went home, looking like an Existentialist. My father looked at me and said: "Oh God." [She laughs].


**Is that where your love for France started?**

Yes, my immersion into Paris was very striking. My mother's ancestors were French Huguenots who lived near Albi and had to leave after the massacres in the 17th century. They came to London and some went to Ireland. I've travelled to Albi to try to find out more about my family's history. There's a book store there with good books about the Huguenots.

**Franco-Belgian comics seem more popular than ever. Why do you think that is?**

Yes, they are everywhere at festivals and comic shops. Part of their popularity is due to the fact that the media has become much more about word and image, and the whole Web is word and image. I think people are used to it now.

**You must be proud of the role that you have played in popularising *bandes dessinées* (comic books or strips).**

For a while I didn't realise I was part of the comics scene, because I always worked for newspapers. If you said you were in comics people thought you meant *The Beano* and *Dandy*. Nearly 20 years ago, when *Gemma Boverly* came out, I went to the comics festival in Angoulême [in Charente], and realised that there was one big comics family, and I was part of it. That was rather good. 

***Gemma Boverly* is in cinemas from 14 August.**



PHOTOGRAPHS: VICTOR SCHIEPPEL; MATTHIEU COLIN/HEMIS.FR



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